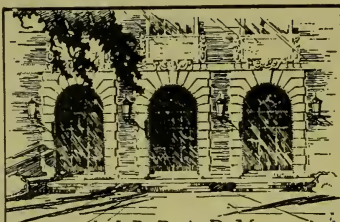


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IN LONDON TOWN.



# IN LONDON TOWN.

A Novel.

BY

KATHARINE LEE,

AUTHOR OF

“A WESTERN WILDFLOWER,” “IN THE ALSATIAN MOUNTAINS,” ETC.

*IN THREE VOLUMES.*

VOL. I.



LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,

Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen.

1884.

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# IN LONDON TOWN.

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## CHAPTER I.

DAVID EVEREST was the only son of a widowed mother, who, however, was not altogether to be pitied on account of her widowhood. Colonel Everest had certainly done his best to make his decease bearable to his wife, by making her life spent with him as unbearable as debt, indifference, and drinking could make it. He had not been a good husband, but nevertheless she made him an excellent widow, and did her duty by his memory as ably as she had exceeded

her duty in her endeavours to lecture him into a better state of behaviour.

The Colonel had not taken kindly to lecturing—perhaps few husbands do—and he had given his wife little opportunity for the use of her powers in that direction, until either his ill fate or his good providence laid him low with a broken arm, and then it is to be feared that Mrs. Everest made up for lost opportunities, and disburdened her mind of the accumulated lectures of years. Whether the lectures hastened the mending of the broken bone or not, the Colonel was soon off to the war again, no whit improved in manners or morals either; and his wife was left with her little five-year-old son to brood over her words herself, if she so choose, for it was certain the Colonel would not.

The next news of him was in that column of the *Times* that was so eagerly read in those Crimean War days by English

wives and mothers. Colonel Everest was dead, and his wife was a nearly penniless widow of six and twenty.

She had one near relation in the world, and only one, and that was a brother, many years older than herself. There had been a quarrel between Colonel Everest and him with regard to money matters, and she had taken her lover's part, and married him in spite of brotherly counsel.

The Reverend Theophilus Burney was as ignorant of women as a man born of woman can be, but he was not nearly so much offended at his counsel being disregarded as he was grieved for his sister's fate. After the marriage he made an offer of reconciliation, but the new bride was too proud to let even his eyes see her humiliation, and she refused his offer coldly, whereupon it had not been renewed; for Theophilus, though a clergyman, and a good man, was but human, and the refusal angered him.

She thought of this refusal as she sat with the open *Times* before her in her dismal lodging in London (the Colonel had not been lavish with regard to money matters). She told herself with a little fierce gesture that she would never go back to be pitied and condoled with, and even as she said it she thought with a sigh of the comfortable Devonshire rectory.

Perhaps if time had been given her she would have gone back, with the words of the prodigal not on her lips, but in her heart; but time was not given her. The very day after the news of her husband's death was in the *Times*, a well-remembered footstep made a sound of stumbling on the steep London stairs, and Mrs. Everest was in her brother's arms before she well knew he was in the room.

She cried when he kissed her, cried as she had not done even when the bad news first came to her, and every tear smote her brother's heart. He begged and



implored her to forgive him, as if, indeed, he had been the transgressor. So keenly did her grief smite him that he believed he was, and ever after alluded to the break in their intercourse with the sincerest shame. He was overjoyed when she consented to go back with him, as after some little demur she did ; and he made a solemn promise that the boy, young David, should be to him as his own son, and he would be as a father to him.

When the mother cried again at this, Theophilus was remorseful and penitent, fearing he had been arrogant and rough with a bereaved woman's holiest feelings. He apologised, and said such things of the departed Colonel as his tender heart suggested, and in course of time even came to believe them, and echoed his sister's sentiments as to the worth of the dear departed.

But the world is censorious, and sadly suspicious ; not all the mourning, the

cambric and crape, displayed by the widow really took anybody in except her unsuspicious brother. Even little David looked oddly at his mother when he heard her mention her dearest husband. David was very inconvenient to the widow for the first few months of her new life at the Rectory.

But memory at five years old is not always very retentive. A donkey, a puppy, a poultry-yard, trees and fields soon drove inopportune reminiscences from David's mind. He roamed about the leafy lanes, and through the fields, and passed through the usual hair-breadth escapes that seem necessary to the career of a small boy.

He went to school at rather a late age. This was not because of his mother's fears and scruples, for she was not much troubled by them, but because his uncle could not bear to give up teaching him Latin and Greek. Mr. Burney was a

scholar, a Fellow of his college, and a more than ordinary lover of ancient learning. Perhaps it would be more correct to say mediæval learning, for, though a good classical scholar, his real interest lay in the study of comparative liturgiology—a subject less known, and perhaps less interesting to the world at large than any other.

Possibly it would be wrong to say that the study of liturgies was the object of Mr. Burney's life; he would certainly have denied it if any one had asked him the question. But then he would have found a difficulty in answering any such question at all: life had glided along with him in so serene and gentle a manner that he had never yet paused to review it. He had, perhaps, a hazy idea of some day really facing the matter, and resolving what he would do with himself; but he passed into white-haired old age before that day ever came, and he had

almost forgotten that such a thing as the possibility of a career had ever existed.

He was very happy in having the boy to teach. Had not David and his mother come to live at the Rectory, Mr. Burney might, in the course of the next twenty years or so, have considered the question of getting married, and so providing himself with a companion. Their presence saved him from the exertion of thinking of such a thing, and he never even contemplated the possibility. He would have liked to have kept the boy at home altogether and poured all the secret stores of his learning into the lad's attentive ears, but his mother interfered.

It was Mrs. Everest's darling wish that her son should follow in the footsteps of his father—at least, that was what she said, and part of it was true, for she really did wish him to go into the army. So David was sent to school, and his uncle



made laborious notes out of all the books he read, to impart them to his favourite in the holidays.

It is not too much to say that the uncle looked forward to David's holidays fully as much as that young scholar himself did. In point of fact, he was the most excited of the two when the lad's long lanky form appeared in the Rectory gateway. David took his coming home very quietly—was rather reticent, indeed, about his school-days in a manner that somewhat surprised his relations, until the half-yearly report arrived, and that explained matters a little.

The rector was less distressed by it than Mrs. Everest was. Acts of lawlessness and outbreak she could have forgiven; a love of play would have pleased her as well as a love of books; if the lad had neglected his studies for cricket or boating, she would have embraced him. David's indifference to sports had always

been a grief to her. But the report made mention of one sin only, and that the crying, most inexcusable sin to Mrs. Everest in all the world—laziness. David, when questioned, owned to it quite naturally. He had hated getting up in the mornings, doing lessons before breakfast, working all the day, going for walks, drilling, and the enforced games; he disliked having to do things when he was told, and at stated times; and in the most unblushing manner confessed to having eluded such unpleasantnesses by the best means in his power.

The rector shook his head and looked sorrowfully at his favourite, and for the sake of discipline he had better have directed his eyes somewhere else, for the sight of the lad's long-desired face caused a triumphant smile to break out over his own, and for the life of him he could not keep down a little chuckle of delight.

Mrs. Everest heard it, of course, and

turned upon him in the full magnificence of her outraged propriety and maternal displeasure, and—it is a sad thing to say of a beneficed clergyman—the rector turned and fled, or, more correctly speaking, shambled into his study, and gently fastened the door behind him.

Mrs. Everest, left alone with her prodigal, questioned him sternly, the more sternly because she detected him in a partially developed movement to follow in the footsteps of his departing uncle. Perhaps if she had been wiser she would have let him go; but what energetic woman ever lost an opportunity of expending some of her superfluous energy upon an idle man, or even boy? Mrs. Everest's energy having had nothing better than her brother and the parish to expend itself upon lately—two notoriously unresponsive objects—had been turned back upon herself in a very dangerous manner. Her piety, which was the most

usual form for it to take, had become a thing most awful to her brother and the household. David's return and his misdemeanours was a perfect godsend to them all, except to David himself.

He bore it very well, though; too well. In fact, he was so hopelessly unconcerned about the whole matter, his mother's lecture included, that she was goaded into giving him a full half-hour extra; but not even that produced any visible effect upon him. He answered all her questions, and acknowledged all his faults, and nodded a cheerful acquiescence to all the probable calamities and fearful consequences she predicted for him in his earthly career, and seemed in no way dismally affected by the picture of a fearful hereafter that would in all likelihood follow upon a wasted and misspent manhood. Not a line lengthened in his round face, not a tear dimmed his blue eyes, as his mother passed from one dread



vision to another; not a sign escaped him of any impatience, save now and then a half-wistful glance at the closed study door across the hall. He was quite cheerful up to the end, when his mother, driven to the extremity of rage and despair, herself burst into a flood of tears such as she had been desirous of raising in him.

“Don’t cry, mother,” he said, putting his arm about her neck and kissing her. “I’m all right; there’s nothing the matter to make you cry.”

“You are a hardened, wicked, ungrateful boy!” cried Mrs. Everest, in indignation. “You have no fear of God or man before your eyes. Don’t come near me!” and the little lady swept past him in a fury, and up the stairs into her own room.

The breakfast-room had been the scene of this display, for the post had arrived in the middle of the meal. David glanced

after his mother as she passed him in her anger, and made a step as if to follow her, but the imperious little gesture of her hand and head stopped him, and left him standing beside the breakfast-table. In a meditative manner he laid his hand upon a jam-pot; the spoon was beside it. David did not inconveniently hurry himself, but in a little while an empty pot stood where a full one had been ; and David, with a sigh of content, put a handful of radishes in his pocket, and turned leisurely towards the study door.

“Ah, my boy!” said the rector, in a cheerful voice, as David came into the study; then, remembering that the lad was in disgrace, he shook his head and ejaculated, “Ah, dear, dear, dear!” in a manner intended, doubtless, to be very sorrowful, but that in reality was brimful of delight and pride.

The boy nodded, but did not speak—his mouth was full, though his heart was not

—but a gleam of fun came into his eyes, and, sad indeed to relate, this young sinner shut one of them, and looked in a knowing manner upon his aged relative with the other.

The boy's coolness after the trying interview to which his uncle knew he had been subjected for the last hour and a half, was so irresistibly delightful to the old man that he laughed outright. In his soul he admired and envied the lad who could wink and munch radishes with perfect absence of all emotion after a scene, the like of which would have made him ill and low-spirited for days. He laughed and rubbed his hands; but his wavering sense of duty came back to him, and he shook his head longer than before, and said as gravely as he could—

“David, David, I did not expect this of you.”

“You have got some new books,” was

David's answer after—shall we say it?—a temporary residence of his tongue in one of his rosy cheeks; “let's have a look at them!”

“Ah! ha! you haven't forgotten the old favourites, I dare say, Davie. Yes, I have a few notes here that will interest you, and a new book or two. Yes, yes; we have not been quite idle while you have been away, Master Davie. What do you say to this for a manuscript copy of the Syriac St. Mark? Ha, ha, ha!”

“Jolly!” was David's somewhat inappropriate answer in a manner in strong contrast to his former easy indifference, and, to his uncle's astonishment, the lad seized the book and, in a stumbling, blundering manner, but with a certain knowledge of his subject, read the first few lines.

The old man jumped up in his delight, and almost knocked over the boy in his joyful embrace.

“Davie, Davie, why this explains the report! Oh, my dear lad, why didn’t you say at once you had been learning Syriac?”

“Oh, I haven’t been learning it regularly,” said David, rather sheepishly, but with a grin of pleasure at the old man’s delighted surprise. “I took your old Syriac grammar with me, and looked at it at odd times, that’s all.”

“That’s all!” cried the rector, “that’s all! My dear lad, how happy you have made me! Here have I been puzzling my old brains over this manuscript, and not getting ahead very much with it after all, and now we can work together. Only”—and here he stopped and looked doubtfully at his nephew—“my dear boy, it would have been so much better for you to have begun with Hebrew, which would have helped you so well in Syriac afterwards. Dear, dear! I wish you had mentioned it to me.”

“But there are no liturgies in Hebrew,” objected David; “and I thought it would be so useful to get at the Monophysite ones in the original.”

“Well, there are the Jewish liturgies, after all,” said Mr. Burney, thoughtfully; “but even if you do not regard those, it would not be wasted, for you might have helped me with my pet idea of the connection between the Breviary offices and the old Temple services. We might have read the Treatise Berachoth together.”

“All right,” said David; “I’ll go for Hebrew next half. I say, uncle, how jolly easy this manuscript is to make out! What fun we’ll have!”

Mr. Burney made no reply, unless a low laugh and a rub of the hands might be considered as such. He was too pleased and proud to speak. He had passed one of the most miserable hours of his life in the study after breakfast, while the lecture was being administered to David.

He had longed to be with the lad and to comfort and uphold him in the ordeal, but he knew from past experience that his presence was worse than useless on such occasions, and only added fuel to his sister's flame. Then his own disappointment about the boy had been very keen. He had thought so highly of his abilities and had taken such pains with his education, that he had fully expected to see him come back staggering under a load of prizes. He had spent whole days in dreaming of David's fame as a great scholar, and the report seemed to have dashed all his hopes to the ground. His extravagant joy at David's very moderate acquaintance with Syriac was evidently the result of the sudden revival of all his hopes and dreams; he scarcely knew how to contain himself at finding his idol even more worshipful than before.

They were sitting together, huddled



up over the precious manuscript, eagerly deciphering it, and oblivious of all the world beside, when the study door opened, and Mrs. Everest came in.

She had dried her tears and composed her manner, but the red lids gave a fierce look to her keen eyes, and the lines about her mouth and forehead were fixed with a grim determination.

Her brother trembled when he looked up and caught sight of her face; then, remembering the change that had taken place in his own mind about David, proceeded eagerly to ease her troubled spirit.

“My dear Charlotte,” he began, “you will be delighted to hear that the report—we—I mean, we are all mistaken, my dear; we——”

“Of course,” said Mrs. Everest, bitterly, “I always am mistaken about David; I always have been. Of course, I have never understood my son.”

“Oh, my dear Charlotte, you will be

as delighted and surprised as I was. What do you think David has been learning? ”

“ Not his lessons,” interposed his mother, sternly. “ Hebrew, or some fantastical nonsense, I dare say ; but not his lessons.”

“ Well, but, Charlotte, really a very good guess of yours. Not Hebrew—I may say in one way I wish he had ; it would have been very useful—but what do you say, my dear, to Syriac. Really, considering the time he has been at it, his knowledge of it is wonderful, quite wonderful ;” and Mr. Burney laid a loving arm on his nephew’s shoulder, and glanced from him to his mother as who should say, “ I won’t praise him before his face, but he is a lad to be proud of.”

“ Syriac ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Everest, and the tone of her voice made Mr. Burney start, there was so much compressed scorn in it. “ And, pray, can you

tell me what is the use of his learning Syriac ? ”

“ Use ? Oh, immense use, my dear. He can help me to read this manuscript, which has been a dreadful puzzle to me ; the subject of Syriac liturgies has yet—— ”

“ Syriac liturgies ! Theophilus, I am astonished at you. And, pray, was David sent to school to study Syriac liturgies ? ”

“ Why, no, Charlotte ; no, no, perhaps not,” replied Mr. Burney, feebly. He was obliged to answer, though he delayed it as long as he could, for she fixed her eyes upon him until he did so, and he felt himself growing hot and cold under her gaze. “ Why, no, perhaps not ; but—— ”

“ But he was sent to learn Greek and Latin, I suppose, and that he has not done. Theophilus, you are encouraging that boy in vice and idleness, and ridiculous foolishness.” Mr. Burney became perfectly limp, and looked appealingly at

David. "And if you encourage him in this absurd manner, he will be fit neither for this world nor the next. David, why did you not attend to your classical studies?"

"Oh, well, I did," said David, slowly; "I did heaps of Latin, but somehow they were always down upon me for it. I don't think they knew much about Latin."

"David, how dare you speak in that manner?"

"Well, they didn't, mother. Why, look here, Mr. Ross—that's the classical master, you know—dropped down upon me for using *liberare* with *ab*, only the other day, and I told him he had better read the Lord's Prayer, and he didn't seem to like it."

"You impertinent boy——" began Mrs. Everest, when her brother interposed.

"But, Davie, my dear lad, Mr. Ross was quite right in saying that it was not

usual in good Latin—at least, in good classical Latin, though even Cicero certainly does use it once or twice. I imagine that the *ab*, or rather *a* in the Lord's Prayer, as in other places in the Vulgate, is due to the influence of the original Greek ἀπὸ, which is, as you know, the kindred word."

"Theophilus, you are only encouraging him."

"My dear, I fear I have been to blame in drawing his attention so frequently to mediæval Latin instead of the classics."

"I think the classics are awfully slow," said David, before his mother could speak again. "Virgil isn't to be compared to Bernard of Morlaix. And there was another thing, the stupid verses one had to write. They dropped down upon me again when they gave us hexameters on the death of Cæsar, and I sent up twenty rhyming dactylic ones in Bernard's style."

"Leonines!" cried old Mr. Burney,

his whole face lighting up with delight ;  
“ Leonines ! Why, my dear lad, they are about as difficult as any Latin metre can be ! To think,” he added, with a chuckle, “ of the lad’s choosing leonines. You haven’t got them about you, have you ? ” he asked anxiously.

“ Really, Theophilus, this is disgraceful,” said Mrs. Everest. “ You are deliberately encouraging him. What can you expect of a boy who goes and writes leonines when he is told to write—— What are the other things called ? ”

“ These leonines are hexameters,” said David, as he pulled a piece of paper out of a pocket-book and gave it to his uncle. “ There, uncle, there they are.”

“ Theophilus, do I understand you are going to *read* them ? ” demanded his sister, wrathfully ; but they did not pay any attention to her, for they were deep in the verses.

“ Good, good,” muttered Mr. Burney,

“very good, Davie;” and he was proceeding to discuss the verses, when Mrs. Everest, unable to contain herself any longer, snatched the offending paper from his hand, and, declaring that she did not know which of them was the worst, and she would soon put a stop to that state of things, left the room in a towering rage.

They looked after her as she went.

“They were very good verses,” said the uncle, thoughtfully; “but surely, Davie, there was a false quantity in the fourth line.”







## CHAPTER II.

DAVID went back to school, after his holidays were over, considerably strengthened in his Syriac, and with a glimmering of the rudiments of Hebrew in his mind. He had enjoyed his holidays very much, far more than his mother had done. It is needless to say she did her best to keep him out of his uncle's study; she was always wanting him to drive with her, or walk with her, or read to her, or do something for her that involved absence from her brother. David submitted patiently to it for a few days, but then he began to have long absences from the house, and was difficult to find. His mother spent

half her time hunting for him, but she never found him, for she never looked in the hay-loft, where the lad lay comfortably enough, with his books beside him. His uncle knew where to find him, and many a pleasant hour did the two culprits spend together among the hay.

David was a trying son for a mother whose ideal of a gentlemanly education consisted chiefly of the study of classics and field sports. David would have none of these things ; he would not even play cricket with the sons of the neighbouring gentry, but preferred to ramble about the country in long solitary walks, or to lie about in the fields with a book in his hand. He was not morose or unsociable, as his habits seemed to imply. On the contrary, he preserved an unvarying cheerfulness of face and speech that nothing could destroy—lectures, homilies, upbraidings, nothing moved him ; he was as serene and happy under them as he

would have been under a shower of praises and caresses, perhaps more so.

“You don’t seem to care whether you are praised or blamed,” she said to him with bitterness one morning, when she had been trying her utmost to rouse in him what she called “a proper ambition.”

“Why, no, mother,” he answered, “I don’t know that I do. Why should I?”

“You are a wicked, graceless boy,” she replied, her anger getting the better of her prudence. “I should like to know what you mean to do with yourself.”

“I should like to do nothing,” he said gently; “but I suppose I shall have to find something to do when I am older. I would rather lie in the fields and eat apples than anything else.”

“Have you no ambition? no desire to be great and useful in your generation? Oh, David, you cannot mean that you have no sense of duty?”

“Is it my duty to be great?” he

asked. "I hope not, I am sure. It would be a great bore."

There was nothing to be done with him but to send him back to school. Mrs. Everest made the going back as humiliating for him as she could by making him the bearer of a long letter to the head-master, in which his faults were all set down, with a few extra ones of her own imagining, combined with a request that the counsels of the wise and the rod of correction might not be spared to her erring son.

It is not to be supposed that David relished either a flogging or a lecture more than other boys, but he seemed to have a wonderful stock of cheerful patience in his system. Possibly the contemplation of his uncle had done much to bring this about. Mr. Burney had a hard time at his sister's hands—all the harder because he knew that she did what she did from a real sense of duty

and a sincere desire to benefit him. But Mr. Burney suffered keenly, and David from his youth up had seen it, and had arrived at the philosophical conclusion that it was better to make the best of things than the worst of them, and that after all it did not very much matter.

David's imperturbability had raised a terrible havoc in Broodleigh Rectory, for it drove his mother into a frenzy, and she in turn worked it off upon the household. Mrs. Everest was the important person in the household, Mr. Burney a mere sufferer. Mrs. Everest was not satisfied with ruling her brother's domestic matters; she also managed his parish for him, and would, if she could, have ordered the ways of all men in it. She vehemently opposed everything that was not of her bringing about. She would turn away a servant who had become engaged to a young man without asking her advice, and would even endeavour to regulate the farmers'

supply of cider to the haymakers. There was nothing she would not interfere with, and so of course, when the squire of the parish died, Mrs. Everest was in the house at the time, and ordered the funeral feast.

The squire had lately lost his wife, and many said that grief for her loss had hastened his own end. Mr. Burney had, in his innocence, ventured upon this as a safe remark to make to his sister, and had been considerably astonished by the contempt with which it was received, and the information that the squire was far too sensible a man to worry himself into his grave for the sake of a silly, insignificant woman like the late Mrs. Betterton. Mr. Burney was not a sufficiently keen observer of human nature to understand what his sister meant, or rather wished to hide ; but the squire's housekeeper, after being, as she expressed it, "worried to death about the linen list and the stores"

by the officious little lady, had given as her opinion "that poor dear master wasn't the fool that some would think, to choose the grave instead of Mrs. Everest."

However, the squire was gone, and his wife was gone, and all they had left behind them was the estate, some three thousand a year, and one little girl to inherit it all.

The question of what was to be done with the little girl was solved on the reading of the squire's will. By that Mr. Burney and a distant cousin of Mr. Betterton's were left as executors and guardians of the child and property, with the request that she should reside with one of them.

The cousin, being a bachelor and a man about town, was extremely anxious that the young lady should reside with Mr. Burney, and the rector being by no means averse to, and his sister being very much in favour of the plan, it was arranged



easily enough, and Fanny Betterton became an inmate of Broodleigh Rectory.

All this happened during David's second term at school, so when he came home for his next holidays he found Fanny occupying the place of daughter to his mother.

For some reason best known to herself, Mrs. Everest was very gracious to her son, and more than gracious, even motherly to the orphan. She did not even allude to his liturgical and linguistic studies, but in some inexplicable manner David found that he had very little time to bestow upon these pursuits. She did not persecute him, and worry him, and harass him as she had done in the last holidays, yet he had even less time to himself.

It not being David's habit to vex his soul with inquiries into the springs of human action, he soon resigned himself to his circumstances, and submitted with a good grace to be driven about by his

mother, and sent out to walk with Fanny.

David, being only fourteen at the time, was not sufficiently grateful for the blessing of female companionship that was thus liberally bestowed upon him; he ought to have been a few years older to have thoroughly enjoyed a long ramble in quiet country lanes with a pretty girl and an heiress. Nothing but his inherent good nature, and a kindly feeling towards one so lately bereaved, kept him from grumbling a good deal. As it was, he could not restrain his feelings while with his uncle.

“What do girls want to tramp up and down a lot of muddy lanes for? It can’t be any fun to them, what do they do it for?”

Mr. Burney only shook his head. He never got beyond that in delineating female character; it was an awful and inscrutable mystery to him, and he preferred to let it remain so.

There was a great deal of church-going

in Broodleigh parish, or more correctly speaking, Rectory, for nobody ever went to church on week-days, except the Rectory family, and the old woman who rang the bell; but Mr. Burney had been in his youth a fervent admirer of Keble, Pusey, and other lights of the English Church of that time, and had instituted a daily service in Broodleigh immediately on his entering upon the living, and it is conjectured that it never occurred to him to take it away again. Without being a Ritualist—for Ritualism, properly speaking, had not developed in his time—he kept up a very careful ritual of his own, which consisted of slight but to him very important ceremonies, of which the parish had never yet discovered the existence.

David had been a member of the choir ever since his coming to Broodleigh, and of late years had performed the office of “server” at the celebrations of the Sacrament, and knew the mysteries of

the "High" version of the English ritual to a hair's breadth. His uncle's studies had interested him from an early age, and he was never happier than when trying to work out some much disputed point of early rite.

Yet with all these tastes and habits David was not a religious boy. He seemed, so his mother said, to be absolutely without the sentiment of reverence; not that he talked exactly irreverently, and certainly not blasphemously or profanely, but to him the Christian mysteries were much on a level with the early Egyptian ones, and produced no more devotion in him than those did.

"You have destroyed the boy's soul with your wicked, irreverent inquiries," Mrs. Everest would complain to her brother. "It is perfectly awful to think of drawing a young boy into those artifices raised by Satan to destroy our souls."

"My dear Charlotte, there can be

nothing dangerous in ancient Christian rites."

"Are they not *Roman*, Theophilus? How can you say they are not dangerous? It is just what they are—crafty, insidious, soul-destroying. Compiled by Jesuits, I have no doubt."

"My dear, Jesuits were not instituted until——"

"Oh yes, of course I know nothing about the matter. I only know that David has no more sense of religion in him than a young Hottentot has."

"Charlotte, I think you are mistaken. David is as interested in religious matters as it is possible for a boy to be—indeed, much more so than most boys."

"In religious *matters*, yes; that is what I complain of. He has no religious feeling whatever. I do believe he considers the Papists are just as good as we are."

"They have an infinitely more interesting service-book," said David, without

looking up from the book he was reading.

“There, Theophilus! do you hear that? ‘A more interesting service-book.’ That is just the way young souls are ensnared; and you encourage him, positively encourage him, in his blasphemy and irreligion. But there, I know what all you Oxford men are,” etc.

When it came to this, Mr. Burney bowed his head before the storm and hurried away. He had long ago given up all attempt at arguing the merits of the question with his sister. It was one of the sorest points in her life that she could not bring him to her way of thinking in religious matters, and force him to abjure the Tractarian movement and all its ways.

After an encounter, or rather an attack, of this sort, Mrs. Everest’s piety was a very oppressive thing to all men. She fell into a habit of sitting with an open Bible in her lap, and a Concordance by

her side, to which she would refer in such an intensely interested manner, that the least observation would have to be repeated several times before she could hear it. In the evenings she would study a volume of sermons with great assiduity, and insist on reading aloud select passages in a grieved and pathetic voice, as though she had been personally insulted, but was too good to take any notice of the affront. The slightest allusion made by anybody else to church or religious matters would be instantly checked as profane. When the attack was very severe, she would even hold a private Bible-reading in the breakfast-room for the female servants in the afternoon, and would gather the members of the household about her for hymn-singing before prayers in the evening.

As Mrs. Everest made it a point never to be pleased with anything or anybody during one of these visitations, and con-



sidered any kind of cheerfulness as a personal affront, there was a good deal of consternation whenever the beginning of one of these dispensations was visible.

At about the height of an unusually prolonged attack of this sort, which occurred when David was sixteen, she announced her wish to her son that he should become a clergyman.

“I have long ago given up all hope of your following in the footsteps of your dear father,” she said pathetically. “After being blessed by such a husband, it is doubtless for my good that a rebellious son has been accorded to me. I might have been lifted up above other women if—— But it is no use talking of it, David. I know that my wishes have never had the slightest effect upon you from the time you came under my brother’s influence, and I have never complained. It is natural that a widowed and sorrowing mother cannot have much

influence over a headstrong youth, so I make no complaint and urge no wish ; but I suppose it is quite a settled thing between you both that you go into the Church—and really it seems to me that it is about the only thing you are fitted for.”

“ Well, I hardly know, mother,” said David, a little uneasily. He had no wish to discuss his future prospects with his mother in her present state. “ There is time enough yet to think of it, is there not ? ”

“ That is always the way with you young people. ‘ Time enough,’ and in a few days you may be in your grave.”

“ Well, in that case it isn’t worth while to decide upon any other career for me, is it, mother ? ” he answered good-humouredly.

“ David, David ! how can you speak with such levity ? How often have I begged and implored you to think really

seriously of your situation — to rouse yourself to some proper ambition, and endeavour to lead a useful and godly life? You are getting a man now, David; you must think of what you are going to do. Neither your uncle's nor my means will admit of your going to college"—David winced: he knew his mother had not a penny but what came to her from her pension, and his uncle's living was only three hundred and fifty pounds a year—"so that is quite out of the question—in fact, never has been in it."

David put his hands in his pockets and leaned against the mantelpiece. From his face no one would have known that the conversation was of any moment to him, but in reality it put a stop to all the plans he had ever formed for himself; they were not many, it is true, but such as they were they had been very pleasant to him.

"Well, you do not say anything," she

said rather snappishly, as she waited for his answer.

“I have nothing to say,” he replied.

“Nothing to say as to how you must manage to get ordained somehow?”

“I shall not be a clergyman. I will not go into orders by the back door. Uncle Theo would not wish it; you would not yourself,” he added, turning round and facing her.

This, in Mrs. Everest's ordinary state, was quite true; it was only when suffering from an attack of nervous religion that she ever even contemplated her son's doing anything of the kind. His direct answer had the effect of bringing her rather more into her usual frame of mind, but she nevertheless replied—

“It is a blessed life, and the mere question of a degree of man's giving——” when David interrupted her with—

“We need not talk of that, mother; it is quite out of the question. Even if I

could go to college, I should not wish to be a clergyman ; it is not a life I care about."

Neither, in truth, did Mrs. Everest care about it for her son ; but she only said—

"I am scarcely surprised, David, that your studies have unfitted you for entering into the ministry of the Church of England. Doubtless you will prefer the 'more interesting service' of the Romish Church. To see my son a Papist will indeed bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave ;" and Mrs. Everest put her handkerchief to her eyes.

David turned to leave the room, feeling that he had had quite enough of the present conversation.

"I shall never desert my uncle's faith," he said, at the door ; and then he went out, and away into the woods.





### CHAPTER III.

DAVID heard no more of his "going into the Church," as his mother expressed it, in direct defiance of her brother's expostulation—

"But, my dear Charlotte, the boy has been in the Church ever since his baptism, and it is therefore obviously impossible for him to re-enter it. The question of his taking holy orders is quite another thing."

"Oh, fiddle!" said Mrs. Everest, contemptuously, and there the matter ended.

In the next holiday after this conversation, David unexpectedly introduced a companion into Broodleigh Rectory.

This was a shy, awkward lad of about eighteen, with a nervous impediment in his speech and a timid, uncertain air about him, as if he were in a perpetual state of embarrassment to find that he existed. He did not seem at all the sort of boy for David to fraternize with, still less to make a friend of, for he was neither clever nor well-read, and did not attempt to show the smallest interest in David's pursuits, except a kind of admiring wonder at all he did or said.

"I *cannot* understand your making a friend of that shy, stupid little creature," said Mrs. Everest to her son, after she had relieved her mind upon the subject of his bringing this lad unannounced and unasked to the Rectory.

"Well, I don't know that I have made a friend of him," answered David, thoughtfully; "it never occurred to me to do so. But, you see, he has no home, only an uncle who pays for his schooling; and he



is going into the Civil Service, and there being an interlude of a month between his appointment and now, and as he had no place to go to unless he stayed on at school, why, I thought he had better come back with me."

"Really, David, you are too provoking. What are we to do with him here, and dear Fanny in the house, too?"

"Oh, he will be all right," said David, coolly; "he and I can go about together. He won't be in yours or Fanny's way, and it will be much nicer for him than being at that dismal school. You see, he has no friends anywhere; his uncle is a surly old miser."

"Is the uncle wealthy, a man of position, David?"

"Well, no, I believe not; he is a timber merchant. Fowler thinks his trade is very bad, and that he is going to smash pretty soon. If so it is lucky for Fowler that we have got him here."

“ Well, really, David,” said Mrs. Everest, rising and going out of the room in her indignation, “ I call it a very pretty thing indeed, that you can’t find a better companion to associate with than a bankrupt tradesman’s nephew. You have not even the sense to choose your friends properly. You are no better than a baby ! ”

“ But he isn’t my friend particularly,” said David, as his mother banged the door after her.

He was rather surprised at the temper she showed about the affair, but soon settled in his mind that it was only a little idiosyncrasy peculiar to women and mothers, and went in search of the unconscious object of maternal wrath.

Master Fowler was certainly a rather awkward guest. His natural nervousness was much increased by Mrs. Everest’s sepulchral manner, which she put on exclusively for his and David’s benefit.

His stammering under this evidence of her displeasure was a thing at once so awful and so complicated that it covered everybody in the room with confusion whenever he essayed to open his mouth—everybody, that is, except David, who would calmly go on with his breakfast or dinner as if nothing was happening.

This unfortunate defect of speech was a great trial to Mrs. Everest. She began by trying to help him over his worst places and to do his talking for him, but as she never hit upon what the poor lad wanted to say, that plan was a failure. She could not wait patiently upon him as David did, so she gradually fell into treating him as a deaf and dumb person, and conveyed to him by signs her desire of knowing if he wished for any more tea, etc.; and on these terms they got on better than might have been expected.

However, he went to London at the end of a month, and soon afterwards

David went back to school, and in course of time rose to be the head of that society.

It is to be feared that he set but an exceedingly indifferent example to the lads below him. He was always late, and always, the masters said, lazy ; but that his uncle refused to believe. Though his school was a private one, the head boy was supposed to be a sort of watch-dog of the masters, as far as looking after the other boys were concerned. David never came up to this standard of perfection, consequently was idolized by the boys, for he never took any notice of them, and was considered by the "Principal" as the worst head boy he ever possessed.

David was not so sorry to leave school, as some boys are said to be. He frankly expressed his hatred of the place from first to last. Even his uncle could not but admit that as a schoolboy David was a decided failure, and, but for his mother's

persistence, would have taken him away after the first year. She, good lady, was determined by hook or by crook to make her boy the boy she wished him to be. She was angry when her brother pointed out to her the lad's cleverness in his own branches of learning. She only wished him to learn what "other gentlemen learn." Even his steadiness and gravity angered her; she would sooner have seen him sow his wild oats than do no husbandry at all. She wanted her son really to be what she had believed her husband to have been when she married him, and, like many mothers, she treated her son as a sort of jelly that could be run into her own mould by a judicious amount of squeezing.

So David was kept at school until he was a great lanky lad of eighteen, with legs too long for his body, and arms too long for his shoulders, and a forehead that was too big for either, and a patient

cheerfulness that was in excess of everything, and a laziness to correspond.

Our poor David was not beautiful to men's eyes at this time of his life, still less to women's. The period of budding hair upon the manly cheek is rarely regarded with favour by the gentler sex. David had a good deal of hair upon his face for his age, but it unfortunately arrived in patches, and hair in patches is perhaps less satisfactory to the eye than no hair at all.

What he lacked in hair upon his face was, however, made up to him on his head. He had a mane of thick, waving, dark brown hair as fine and soft as silk, and—horror of horrors to his mother—he would not keep it cut !

Perhaps one needs to be a British officer, or the wife of one, to appreciate fully what this meant to Mrs. Everest. Everything that was low, disreputable, and “foreign” belonged by right to the

man who wore long hair. She nearly shrieked when she saw her son come back from school, and her first remark was a command to go to the barber's.

David did not say he would go, and he did not say he would not go; but he did not go until his mother carried him off there herself, and stood over him while he submitted to the operation.

"He is the most obstinate boy in all the world," she said to her brother in the evening.

"Charlotte, you are indeed mistaken; there is not a trace of obstinacy in him."

"You tell a mother that she does not know her own son!"

The rector was not equal to the retort that very few mothers do, but he shook his head in gentle deprecation, and sidled back to his study; and for once Mrs. Everest was left rightful victor of the field.

The question of David's career was now



being very seriously discussed by everybody in Broodleigh Rectory except that young gentleman himself. Perhaps he had not outgrown his earlier ambition of lying in the fields and eating apples all day, that being the only desire he had ever expressed about his future, for he certainly mentioned no other.

“He is only fit to be married!” his mother exclaimed to herself in bitterness, when every possible profession had been suggested to him, and he had acknowledged that he did not care about any of them; but she was too discreet to make her thought public.

Mr. Burney was by no means in such a hurry to choose a profession for David as his mother was. He enjoyed having the lad at home with him so much that he dreaded any allusion to his leaving him again; and as David struggled out of “hobbledehoyhood” into manhood, and his beard arrived in all its unshorn silken

splendour, Mrs. Everest gradually said less about the matter.

When Fanny Betterton came back from school "for good," as she expressed it, David's beard had just become presentable to feminine sight, and though he was still too long for his breadth, he was anything but an unattractive object to a girl's eyes.

So at least Miss Fanny thought when she saw him on the platform of the little country station, waiting for her. Twelve months will do a good deal for a lad of nineteen, and Fanny had not seen him for that period. He handed her into the pony-carriage politely enough. David had never been awkward in his manners to women, only sometimes blunt in his speech—a much lighter offence to a woman than uncouthness of demeanour. David's manner to what, it must be owned, he considered the feebler sex, was a mixture of tender protection and in-

voluntary deference; and few girls are proof against that combination, especially when accompanied by deprecatory glances from a pair of fine blue eyes.

Before Fanny had arrived at Broodleigh Rectory, which was five miles from any station, she had quite changed her mind with regard to the anticipated dulness of the life there. She did not acknowledge even to herself that it was David who had wrought the change in her, but probably if it had been Mr. Burney who had driven to the station for her, she would have regretted her parlour-boarder life at Exeter as keenly then as she did two hours before.

There was a good deal of fuss at the Rectory over Fanny's coming home, all produced by Mrs. Everest, of course. One might have thought her a disconsolate mother welcoming back a long lost and dearly loved daughter, instead of a guardian's sister receiving

a girl she had seen not many months before at school in Exeter. (Fanny's last holidays had been spent with school friends.) Mrs. Everest embraced her most effusively, called her her dear daughter, declared she had been miserable without her, etc., and in all respects behaved as an afflicted parent might have done under other circumstances.

Fanny was pleased and grateful for the embraces and the fuss; both were pleasant to her. The new furniture in her room, the late dinner, all in honour of her, were delightful after school life. She put on her white muslin and blue ribbons in quite a flutter of spirits, and in the full consciousness of being really grown up, and a person of importance.

Fanny, though not precisely a beauty, was certainly not the opposite. She was a tall girl, and plump with that soft white plumpness that one often sees in a certain Teutonic type of woman. Her com-

plexion was very pink and white; her cheeks dimpled when she smiled; her eyes were blue, rather expressionless, of a pale colour, with fair eyelashes and rather fat, white lids. She had light hair, not quite yellow enough for flaxen, but too light to be called pale brown; and was altogether a good-looking, sweet-tempered, pleasant creature, a trifle dull perhaps, but gentle and womanly in her ways.

“The perfection of a daughter-in-law,” thought Mrs. Everest, as David took her in to dinner; and as that good lady had but one son, her sentiment needs no explanation.

It certainly was pleasant to have a girl in the house, and David and his uncle were agreed about that; but was it possible that part of the pleasantness was the knowledge that now they never had to face the mistress of the house alone at meals? The thoughts of men are some-

times base. Did David and his uncle recall the grim stoniness of those family banquets, and the deluge of words that came after them?

Fanny was bright and cheerful, not gay or witty, but pleasantly companionable and thoughtful for those about her. She cut the morning paper for Mrs. Everest, and warmed the rector's slippers for him, and performed innumerable little offices in the course of the day for everyone except—and this was a notable exception—David.

“You never offer to run and fetch my hat for me, Fanny,” he said to her one morning, when she had just equipped the rector for morning service.

“Oh, you can fetch it yourself,” she said, laughing.

“So Uncle Theo did before you came back. Are you going to help everybody except me, Fanny?”

“You are big enough to help yourself.”

“ I may be big enough, but I am dreadfully weak. You don’t know how weak I am. I have outgrown my strength, I have really, and nobody believes it except Uncle Theo. I know I am beautiful and good, but I am not strong.”

Fanny had looked grave at the beginning of his speech, but she laughed at its conclusion.

“ I don’t believe a word of it,” she said.

“ What! Not that I am good and beautiful? You ask Uncle Theo; and as for weakness, I declare I have hardly energy enough to crawl about the house sometimes, only one does not like to be always complaining.” And David’s voice and eyes became remarkably expressive.

Fanny was a little puzzled by him; he really did look very slight and thin for his height. She began secretly to pity him, and as she watched him day after day and noticed a certain weary air about



him, she began by degrees to do the little things for him that she did for the others; and, indeed, waited upon him with such assiduity that the young scamp had a considerably luxurious time of it, and enjoyed himself very much.

Life at Broodleigh Rectory was not exciting; it was, in fact, as dull as any country life can be. Mr. Burney, though on good terms with all his neighbours, was intimate with none of them. He never visited anywhere out of his own parish, and rarely there. The clergy of the neighbourhood were all of a different school of theology from his, and regarded him with disapproval, not to say aversion. There was never anything like a collision between Mr. Burney and his clerical brethren, for Mr. Burney always kept out of the way of such possibilities; but Broodleigh Rectory was not open to the brethren in the sense that other clerical houses were; there was no cordial

intercourse with it, and but very little formal.

Now that Mr. Betterton was dead, and the manor-house shut up, there was no resident gentleman in the parish, save the rector, so David and Fanny were thrown pretty much on each other for society—a position of affairs that David sank quietly into as he sank into most things that he could not avoid.

Wisdom had, out of the ordinary run of things, come to Mrs. Everest with length of years. She no longer strove to entice or steal her son away from his uncle's study. She let him spend as much time there as he pleased, without remonstrance, until David gradually fell into a habit of finding that he needed fresh air in the afternoon; and Fanny was generally ready for a walk about the same time.

“All things work together for good!” said Mrs. Everest piously to herself as

she watched her son and Fanny walk down the lane together, and with a sigh of genuine satisfaction the good lady turned to the third volume of the last new novel that had reached Broodleigh some two years after its publication. (Mrs. Everest had not had a religious attack since Fanny had come back.)

A Devonshire lane on a sunny day in early spring, when the primroses are starring the red earth, and a tender flutter of building birds is stirring among the soft green of newly-opened leaves, makes a good place for a young man to think of love, especially if he has a fair, sweet girl beside him who responds to his every look and word, and looks and feels as if the earth were made for happiness. David would never have a better opportunity in all his life for falling in love, nor a surer one for getting it returned; but David was one of those unfortunate people who, somehow, never seize on the

right opportunity : he let this one go by, and the whole story of his life was thereby altered.

Being, as usual, quite unconscious of there being any necessity for him to do anything, he sauntered by his companion's side down the leafy lane, enjoying himself very much. Country sights and sounds were always pleasant to him ; they were doubly pleasant now after a hard morning's work at Hebrew. Sad to say, David was thinking far more of his Hebrew than of his companion.

Yet he was pleased to have Fanny with him ; he found her useful to talk to. Her mind being a perfect blank with regard to any of his special studies, he could pour freely upon it his own theories and remarks. He was sure of never being contradicted, or snapped up by somebody else's theory, which latter is a sore trial to all young students. He could expound by the hour to the bewildered Fanny, and

frequently talked himself quite round to the other side of the question he had started from—a fine exercise for his intellect, and one that made him very careful of making up his mind on any subject with which he was not thoroughly acquainted.

And as to Fanny—well, what did it matter if David talked about Hebrew or Syriac, or went into the vexed question of early Christian schisms and heresies? it all went in at one of her soft white ears, and out at the other. But she had the sight of David's face, and the consciousness of holding his entire attention the whole time. There are worse vehicles than Hebrew or early heresies, for conveying love.

So David talked to his heart's content, and Fanny listened, and both were happy. But, alas! when they came to the end of the long lane they were no nearer together than they were before; only David

was quite satisfied about a point in the history of the Ephesine family of liturgies, and Fanny had made up her mind to have pink feathers instead of blue in her new bonnet.





## CHAPTER IV.

MORE than a year went by: David was past twenty-one, and Fanny was past nineteen. They were quite old enough, in Mrs. Everest's opinion, if not actually to get married, at least to talk of doing so; and, so far, not a word had been breathed on the subject.

Of course this was David's fault, and a very serious fault it was in his mother's eyes. A young woman with three thousand a year, a good house and estate, who is pretty and pleasant, and ready to say "Yes," does not generally come in the way of a penniless young man more than once in his life. Here was the girl,



the estate, and the love, and David made no more sign of being sensible of the benefits before him than if he were deaf, dumb, and blind. He was clearly a son framed to agonize a mother's heart.

He was ready enough to talk to Fanny, and Mrs. Everest had for some months derived great comfort from his doing so ; but that was before she knew what he talked about. When she heard of the Hebrew and Syriac, and the early rituals and heresies, she was angry, and told her son that girls did not care to be talked to on such subjects.

“Fanny doesn't mind,” said David, composedly. “I told her to tell me if it bored her, and she never has ; and she is a capital creature to talk to, for she never remembers anything, so I can talk over a subject as often as I like. Some of my most valuable discoveries are due to Fanny's deliciously *mal à propos* remarks ; she muddles everything up, and

asks the most surprising questions. She is awfully good practice for a lecturer to begin upon."

"You don't mean to say you propose to give lectures, David?"

"I don't know, mother. I suppose I must do something some day, and I rather like talking."

"Then, why don't you talk to Fanny of something she likes?"

"Oh, she doesn't like anything very much; she is just as pleased with Syriac as anything else. Girls don't have intellects."

"Girls have likes and dislikes."

"Fanny hasn't."

"Yes, she has; she likes you."

"I dare say she does."

"You don't seem to care much."

"No; why should I? I have always been under the impression that we liked each other very well."

"David, I do really believe you care

more for your uncle's horrid books than for that sweet girl."

"Of course I do. Fanny is very nice, but she is not nearly so interesting as liturgies."

Mrs. Everest had a very bad attack of religious depression after this, and the lives of all persons in Broodleigh Rectory became burdens to them for a week. At the end of that time she put away her commentary, and took to letter-writing, and was very mysterious and serious for some time.

One day, when Mr. Burney and David were just leaving the breakfast-room for the study, she desired them to remain, as she had something of consequence to say to them.

Fanny was just going away, but Mrs. Everest begged her to stay also; and when they all sat staring at her and wondering what was coming, she, with much solemnity, began her explanation of her rather mysterious conduct.

“What I have to say relates chiefly to my son,” she began, in a whining voice; “the unhappy turn which his studies have taken can be no secret to any one here. The Word of God is no longer considered sufficient light for his path, or guidance for his heart. His mind has been filled with the pride of knowledge, and the lust of so-called learning has taken hold of his soul. For years I have striven against this unhappy tendency, but in vain. The knowledge that puffeth itself up against the Word of Life will not be moved by the tears or entreaties of a widowed mother.” Here Mrs. Everest put her handkerchief to her eyes, and her audience looked and felt extremely uncomfortable.

This desirable state of things having been reached, Mrs. Everest put her handkerchief away, and proceeded in a brisker tone.

“But it is not of my troubles that I

wish to speak. May none of you ever know the anguish of a mother's heart over an erring son ! ”

“ There is only one of us eligible for the position, mother,” interrupted David, good-humouredly, “ so don't let us harrow up poor Fanny's feelings prematurely.”

“ Your levity, David, when any serious subject is broached, is one of the severest trials of my life. You have no sense of reverence for the Anchor of our faith, so how should you have for your mother ? But I will not complain. I have borne my burden in silence, and so I trust to do unto the end, when the thoughts of all hearts shall be revealed.”

“ Could you not anticipate that a little, mother, and tell us what we are gathered in council for now. It's rough on poor Fanny to keep her here to listen to a recitation of my sins.”

“ Fanny, I am well aware, David, would sooner hear you praised than blamed.”

Here Fanny blushed, and David looked kindly at her. Perhaps the glance softened his mother, for she proceeded in a milder tone—"As I am sure we all would. The question now is, David, what do you mean to do with yourself?"

"To do my duty in that state of life unto which, etc., and what that state of life is I haven't the faintest idea."

"The old answer, David; no ambition, no desire for right."

"Why, my dear Charlotte," interposed Mr. Burney, "you have now heard the lad say he wished to do his duty; and as for ambition, why we must qualify our title to ambition by good hard work first, and Davie is working, has worked very hard indeed. Really, the progress he has made lately is astonishing, quite astonishing."

"In Hebrew, I suppose?" said Mrs. Everest, contemptuously.

"Well, yes; in Hebrew. In Hebrew,

certainly, though as far as our special subject is concerned, he knows quite enough for the purpose. I was thinking of Coptic at the moment, and the wonderful way in which he is tracing out the Oriental origin of the Mozarabic and Gallican Sacramentaries."

"Just so. I have heard of nothing but your popish liturgies for years. Much good may they do you!"

"Coptic, my dear Charlotte, is not precisely popish. So far from being so, the liturgy of that Church has been considered heretical by——"

"Don't tell me about your Coptics, Theophilus. Answer me, are they *Protestant*?"

"Why, no, my dear; they were——"

"Very well, that is enough for me. They are Roman and soul-destroying. I desire to hear no more about them. I can only feel that it is a special mercy that you have never, either of you, yet



deserted the Protestant Church of our nation for the 'damnable doctrines' of——"

"Sh—sh—sh!" said David; "ladies present."

"David!" said his mother, fiercely, "you are enough to make any woman wild with you. Why don't you listen to what I am going to say?"

"I was only thinking of Fanny's feelings," said David, meekly.

"Feelings! A great deal you care for anybody's feelings. You are an abandoned, heartless, wicked boy, lost to every sense of reverence or right; and now, when I am trying all I can do to further your happiness, against all my own wishes, you thwart me at every turn."

"My dear mother," said David, gently, "I really beg your pardon; I was only joking."

"That is what I complain of, David. You are always joking. Will jokes help you on your death-bed? Ah, David, when

it is *too late* you may remember your mother's words."

David sighed. It would certainly not be for want of maternal counsel that he would forget them. The sigh cheered his mother up.

"Now, here," she said, pulling a letter out of her pocket, "is a communication I received this morning from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, offering you, on account of his old friendship with me in happy years long past, a nomination to the Registered Statistics Office."

"Eh, eh?" said Mr. Burney; "Civil Service! A very good thing, my dear Charlotte, but quite unsuited to our dear boy. Davie's learning and studies would be quite thrown away on registered statistics—positively thrown away."

"Of course you object to everything I propose for my son, Theophilus. I quite expected that. Every effort that I make for him you invariably thwart. Why is

not David following his blessed father's footsteps now, and serving his country as a Christian man and a gentleman should do? Why, I ask, is David not doing this?"

"Because I have no fancy for fighting," said David, seeing the limp and distressed condition of his old uncle. "You need not bring Uncle Theo into that, mother. If I had joined the army I should have deserted, I dare say. Now, about this proposal."

Mr. Burney groaned. He did not know much of the Civil Service, but he knew enough of it to feel very certain that his beloved pupil was eminently unsuited for the humdrum routine work, the captiousness of superior officials, the general rush and potter that distinguish so many branches of that unremunerative service.

Mrs. Everest knew this quite as well as Mr. Burney, perhaps better, and she by

no means concealed the unpleasantness of the position from her auditors. Indeed, so melancholy a picture did she draw of the life, that the poor old rector retired into his study at the end of the conversation in a most abject condition of despair. David would have followed him, but his mother beckoned him upstairs into her room.

“You have heard what I have said, David. I considered it was my duty to place all the disadvantages of the offer before you. I would not mislead my own son with false hopes. But, David, you must accept this offer.”

“I don’t quite see the necessity, mother.”

“I know you do not, that is why I have brought you here to speak to you in private. Did it ever occur to you what we have to live on?”

“You have a pension, and Uncle Theo has his living and fellowship.”

“And what have you?”

“Nothing.”

“Quite so. Now, David, your uncle is an old man, and a failing man. Don’t interrupt me, I know my brother better than you do. My pension is not enough for me to live on, let alone keep you upon. Your uncle’s income dies with him. *Now*, do you see why you must accept this offer?”

David stood thoughtfully leaning against the mantelpiece. It was autumn weather, and the scent of the late violets in the garden was wafted in at the open window; there was a sound of busy rooks cawing in the old elm trees outside. Everything around him spoke of the peaceful country that he loved. He wanted a few moments to consider the plan before him, though, even then, he knew he must adopt it; but David did not like to be hurried, and he wanted to review calmly his position.

His mother took his silence wrongly, as she always did.

“I did not believe that my husband’s son would ever even have contemplated being a burden upon his mother,” she said haughtily, after a few moments.

For the first time in his life David answered his mother rudely.

“Have it your own way,” he said. “I don’t care what becomes of me;” and with this he walked out of the room and down the stairs.

He stopped at the study door and went in. The old rector was sitting in his accustomed place, but he was not reading. His elbows were on the table among his scattered papers, and his head upon his hands. He looked up as David came in.

“It’s all right, Uncle Theo,” the lad said in a husky voice, as he put his arm on the old man’s shoulder. “I shall get a British Museum reading-ticket, and now

I shall be able to find out all about the Ephesine Liturgies.”

“God bless you, my boy,” answered Mr. Burney, gazing with moist eyes into the lad’s face. “It will be a dreary parting, Davie.”

“But think of the Ephesine Liturgies,” said David.







## CHAPTER V.

HARCOURT STREET, Bloomsbury, is one of the dismallest of the dismal streets in that eminently dismal quarter. The houses are tall, narrow, and ricketty, grimed with dirt within and without, and most of them have broken out into an eruption of bills in the windows, announcing that apartments are to be let—these being the very last things that any healthy, sane person would be desirous of taking in such a locality. All the houses are shut in by corroded iron railings that seem unable to bear up against the weight of soot that rests upon them. The steps are all worn away in groves and holes. Bells are generally

detached from their handles, and the paint peels from the doors. The side walks seem the exclusive property of the children, who quarrel and scream and loiter there at all hours of the day, and most of the night. French laundresses, milliners, dress and stay makers occupy a good many of the lower floors at the eastern end of the street; but towards the west, Harcourt Street is eminently respectable, and devoted chiefly to taking in and doing for young men who do not dine at home.

These desirable inmates are, however, not always to be obtained, and landladies often have to put up with inferior game. In No. 16, Harcourt Street, there was at present only one specimen of the superior sort—a mild young man, with light hair and short sight, who came there regularly every afternoon at ten minutes past four, and shut himself up until ten minutes to nine the next morning, and

never took anything but tea, bread and butter, and rashers—a very model of a lodger. Mrs. Dodds felt that if she could secure another like him for her empty first-floor, she might indeed look for happiness in the future. Her second-floor was occupied by an artist. Mrs. Dodds did not approve of artists. She knew of artists who had no respect for the natural feelings of a landlady on quarter-day; but this artist, who was a middle-aged woman, had hitherto “obliged” Mrs. Dodds with great regularity. So, though that worthy lady regularly lashed herself every week into a state of smothered ferocity in case of non-payment, she had always so far received her money. But there was yet another floor—the attics, or third-floor. There was a nice skylight in the large room, as Mrs. Dodds pointed out to any possible lodger, and if there was no other window in the little room, why, you

could leave the door open; there was light enough in the big room for two. The roof of these rooms was sloping at the sides, and the little room was nothing more than a closet boarded off from the larger one. Both were damp, dingy, bare, and cold, and as comfortless dwelling-places as could well be found.

Some years ago they had been taken by an old gentleman and his daughter. They would only want them for a short time, the old man said—a few days, at most a few weeks; they were in temporary distress, and should soon have their affairs all settled. They would bring a little furniture just for the time; it was a mere temporary arrangement, anything would do.

So two stump bedsteads, a table, and a couple of chairs, and one or two little odds and ends had been sent in, and the old man and his daughter took possession.

He was rather a tall, thin man, and he

seemed of a fidgety, excitable disposition. Mrs. Dodds felt herself justified in asking for a fortnight's rent in advance before she came to terms about her rooms.

The little girl who was with him was a plain, sallow child, with large deep brown eyes of a reddish tinge, and flaming red hair—a stern, quiet-looking child, utterly unlike her fidgety, restless father. Somehow or other Mrs. Dodds felt more reliance on the child than she did on the father.

They had stayed on in the dismal attics, day after day, week after week, year after year, the old man ever talking of going, the girl rarely speaking to any one. No additional comforts had been added to their rooms; very little food was consumed in them; and scarcely ever, except on Sundays and in the evenings, was a fire lighted there, even in the bitterest weather.

The old man generally went out every morning and did not return until night, yet he did not seem to have any situation, for sometimes he would stay at home for a week together, and then he spent all his time in arranging vast quantities of papers that he always had strewn about on the table. What the girl did with herself all day nobody knew, and nobody cared, at any rate, for some years. When the little artist came to live on the second floor, one human being, at least, took some interest in the forlorn child. Miss Hatchard, with the free-and-easiness common among the brethren and sisters of her craft, often left her door open, and went on with her work, regardless of the possibility of prying eyes invading her sanctum. Standing before her easel and painting briskly away, the little woman now and then noticed a childish figure glide slowly down the stairs and pass her door. It was a red-haired, slight figure,

clad in a poor gown, and childish enough to linger in passing and steal a glance in at the open door. But the little figure never turned its head, never looked at the streak of sunlight that fell upon the landing floor, never betrayed by the slightest sign any consciousness of there being any door there at all.

Miss Hatchard began by being a little amused, and ended by being somewhat piqued. She was a lonely woman, and would have been glad of even a friendly greeting from the passing girl. Besides, she argued with herself, "It ain't natural for a girl not to be curious about nothink." She put her easel close beside the door with a showy picture upon it, and left it there while she stood back a little. The girl took not the slightest notice.

"Hello!" said Miss Hatchard.

The girl stopped.

"Did you speak?"



“Fond of pictures, ain’t you?” said Miss Hatchard, waving her paint-brush. “Most girls is. Step in and look around, if you like. You won’t hinder me. Lor, if I was going to be hindered by that I shouldn’t do much.”

Rather to Miss Hatchard’s surprise, the girl did walk in, and very deliberately walked round the room, looking at the various half-completed works of art that lay there.

“Fond o’ pictures?” asked the artist.

“No,” said the girl.

“Lor!” said Miss Hatchard, a little taken aback by the cool directness of the reply. “What are you fond of, then?”

“Nothing,” said the girl calmly.

“Well, I never!” ejaculated Miss Hatchard, pausing, with her brush uplifted in the air. “Well, I never! Do you like that picture?” she continued, as the girl paused before the easel.

“No,” she said; “it’s badly drawn.”

“Well, however do you know that?” retorted the artist, a little affronted.

The visitor made no reply, save by unbuttoning the sleeve of her dress and baring her arm.

“There,” she said, “look at that. My elbow is not like yours in the picture.”

Miss Hatchard looked and sighed. It was only too obvious that the uncivil young visitor spoke the truth.

“I will stand here and let you alter it, if you like,” the girl said; “that is, if you think it is worth while getting it right.”

“Worth while? Of course it is,” said the little artist. “That’s very obliging of you to stand; for, between you and me, I can’t afford a model very often, and am obliged to do my figures out of my own head.”

The girl made no reply, and Miss Hatchard painted away industriously for some little time. The girl held her arm

as steady as a rock. It was a smooth, well-shaped arm, a little too thin—the girl was too thin everywhere; she looked only half nourished, which was really the case. Miss Hatchard noticed the colour of her skin—a clear cream colour, not white, not even very fair, but with no warmth of colour about it; it looked almost bloodless in its waxen hue.

“I never see no such colour as yours before,” she said, while she squeezed some Naples yellow upon her palette. “You ain’t white, nor you ain’t yeller, nor brown, nor red. I never see no such colour. You ain’t got no mulatter about you, have you?”

For an instant a little red flush came into the girl’s cheeks, and her eyes brightened, but the colour faded directly, and she said—

“No; I am English and Italian.”

“Why, Eytalians` is mostly brown, as I know `em,” responded Miss Hatchard,

as she put her head on one side and gave a dab at her canvas. "If you wouldn't be partic'lar to a minute, I'd paint your neck in, so as to get the right shade. As I was a-saying, Eytalians is generally brown, when they ain't Christian white people dressed up like foreigners; but you ain't no brown in you; and your 'air—why, it's as red as red!" and Miss Hatchard worked on in a ruminating manner.

"What's your name?" she asked at last.

"Fiametta Thorold."

"Lor, what a funny name!"

"It was my mother's," said the girl, not without a little stiffening of the neck.

"Ah!" said Miss Hatchard. "Foreign names do sound sing'lar. Now, my name's Mariar. I dessay that sounds sort o' odd to you."

"I know the Italian form of it pretty well," said the girl, smiling for the first

time ; “ and I think that is prettier than the English form.”

“ Ah, I dessay,” said Miss Hatchard, in a tone of commiseration. “ No doubt you cling to your own ways ; but your par, he ain’t Eytalian, is he ? ”

“ No ; he is English.”

“ And what’s his trade ? What do he do, I mean, to get his living ? ” Miss Hatchard explained, in consideration of the young foreigner’s probable lack of acquaintance with English idioms.

“ He has no trade,” said the girl scornfully ; “ he is a gentleman.”

“ Lor ! well, I shouldn’t ha’ thought it,” said Miss Hatchard, simply. “ And why ever don’t he do something, my dear, to get a nicer ’ome for you than a attic ? ”

“ Because he is a fool,” said Fiametta, quietly ; “ because he throws good money after bad, and because he believes in old things instead of new ; because he is an

aristocrat, and will not soil his hands with toil, though he would steep his feet in the blood of the people, and think that no disgrace. But he will not work, neither will he let me work."

Miss Hatchard stared at her young friend over her palette in a manner expressive of the most profound astonishment. "Well, I never!" she ejaculated feebly.

"Yes," said Fiametta, still holding her arm in its required position, and speaking as calmly as if she were discussing the weather—"Yes; my father considers himself the rightful heir to a large property. I don't believe he is, myself; but he thinks so, and so he tries to prove it. He has been some years about it now, and I suppose he will go on so until he dies."

"But what do you live on now?"

"What he makes when he can tear himself away from his papers, and deeds,

and pedigrees, by copying in the British Museum; and I believe we have a few pounds a year from some share or something he was not able to sell when he disposed of the rest of his property."

"But suppose he dies, what will you do, my dear?" inquired the little artist, with genuine concern in her tones.

Fiametta shrugged her shoulders; then, letting her arm drop, said, "Work. I am tired of standing now."

"Well, I am very much obliged to you," said Miss Hatchard, gratefully. "Will you stop and have a bit of dinner? I am just a-going to begin. Biled pork and greens."

Fiametta hesitated.

"I can't ask you back again," she said, "and I don't believe in charity. I will neither give it or receive it. It is demoralising alike to both."

"Lor, this ain't charity!" said Miss Hatchard, sweeping her paints from one



corner of the table. "Why, you've been standing for me to eighteenpenny worth, and your dinner won't cost that. Sit down;" and Fiametta sat down.





## CHAPTER VI.

THE young gentleman before referred to, who occupied Mrs. Dodds's ground-floor, was none other than Mr. Frederick Fowler, David's old schoolfellow. His quiet and regular habits have already been mentioned. He always came straight back from the British Museum, where he was a "junior assistant," to Harcourt Street, and he spent his evenings all alone with his books.

In person Mr. Fowler was a slightly-made young man, with rather stooping shoulders, and an uncertain kind of walk, as though he were afraid of committing himself by taking too decided a

step in anything. He had thin sandy-coloured hair, that hung in a limp way down the back of his neck, and was too modest to assert itself anywhere on his face. His eyes were supposed to be of a pale blue ; but as Mr. Fowler, partly from shyness, partly from a vague effort to see better out of them, invariably kept them all but entirely closed when speaking to anybody, their colour was at best a matter of conjecture.

Mr. Fowler served his country between the hours of nine and four, and very unprofitable service he found it. For the magnificent income of one hundred and twenty pounds a year, rising by tens to two hundred and fifty, his country required Mr. Fowler to pass seven hours a day in an underground cell, badly lighted and worse ventilated, and very indifferently heated, in company with a large collection of miscellaneous and extremely evil-smelling specimens of Palæon-

tological Conchology and of various other Palæontological, Archæological, Præ-historical, Entomological, and a few other 'ological curiosities and remains, real and supposed.

Mr. Fowler being of an exceptionally meek and lamb-like disposition, he was never known to make any complaint of either his country or his luck ; but, as he did not express any satisfaction either, it is possible that he found the subjects too dismal for contemplation.

Mr. Fowler had very few acquaintances and no friends. His poverty and his shyness, the unfortunate impediment in his speech, and his studious habits, all combined to render him a lonely man. He was on speaking terms with a few other junior assistants as friendless as himself, and outside the Museum he had no acquaintances at all, unless, as seemed very unlikely, any of his old schoolfellows should meet and recognize him.

This being the case, Mr. Fowler's perturbation of mind may easily be imagined when one winter morning, as he was pursuing his customary labours, a childish voice said at his elbow, "Oh, if you please, are you Mr. Frederick Fowler?"

It was a timid voice, with a half pathetic, half bewildered cadence in it, and it astonished Mr. Fowler quite as much as if one of the "specimens" before him had taken to itself legs and walked away.

"And, if you please," the voice continued, "can you tell me anything about palæontological conchology?"

The question was such a very unusual one, and the voice was such a very uncommon one in that department, which ladies do not generally beautify by their presence, that Mr. Fowler was quite taken off his guard, and, instead of replying in a vague and uncertain manner, as he would have done if he had time to

reflect, he said in about thirty seconds in what was a great hurry for him.

“Oh dear, no! I am the last person, or one of the last, you should ask about such a thing.”

“But the attendant said you were Mr. Frederick Fowler, and cousin Tom certainly said you were in the Palæontological Conchology Department; and this is it, is it not?”

“Oh yes, this is it,” said Mr. Fowler, his native bashfulness again deserting him at the enormity of the supposition. “B-b-but that is just the very reason why.”

“I don’t understand,” said the young lady, looking at Mr. Fowler with a pair of widely opened blue eyes that had as little guile in them as a baby’s.

“Oh, it’s simple enough,” said Mr. Fowler. “You see, specialists are not required here, except in very few cases; so of course if a man understands any one

subject pretty well he must necessarily be put into quite another department."

The young lady shook her head and looked still more puzzled.

"I really thought," she said at last in a plaintive voice, "that I should only have to come here and ask you, and you would tell me all about palæontological conchology."

There was silence for the space of a minute or two after this, and for the first time in his life Mr. Fowler wished that he did understand some of the mysteries of his department.

"Is it *very* difficult?" the young lady asked.

"I—I really don't know," stammered Mr. Fowler, his original bashfulness having come over him in the interval of silence.

"I don't know what to do now," the young lady said sorrowfully.

There was another space of silence.



“I—I—at least, that is, I think it is possible, at least, I know a man in the library who could tell you all about it,” said Mr. Fowler, turning crimson at the audacity of his proposal; “if you would like, that is, if you wanted to know.”

“I don’t *want* to know in the least,” said the young lady, “only aunt says I have not the slightest aptitude for general information, and so I must take up a special subject; and as Greek and mathematics and political economy are rather commonplace now, she chose this subject for me. I don’t *want* to know anything about it at all.”

“But—but,” said Mr. Fowler, in an agony of shyness, yet impelled by a power he had never known before to continue the conversation, “are you obliged to learn things you don’t want to?”

The girl looked at him with a wondering expression in her baby eyes.

“Oh yes,” she said solemnly. “It

would be dreadful not to have a part in the higher education of women. Aunt says I must go to Girton next year, and I must get up a special subject in the mean time. I wish it wasn't something that had such a long name. What is it about, do you know?"

Mr. Fowler moved uneasily from one foot to the other, then, looking nervously round the corner of the partition to make sure that none of the superior officials were within hearing, he said in a whisper, "I—I am not quite sure, but I *think* it's about shells."

"Oh, that might be nice!" cried the girl. "Shells are pretty."

"But these have all been buried such a long time that nobody is quite sure what they are," said Mr. Fowler, in a dubious tone.

"Oh!" said the young lady with a shade of disappointment coming over her pretty face.

In a minute or two she looked up and asked—

“Have you got any special subject, or do you go for general information?”

Mr. Fowler reddened to the tips of his toes and the roots of his hair.

“I—I know a little,” he stammered; “at least, that is, I have w-w-worked very hard at Anglo-Saxon.”

“Then why don’t you do Anglo-Saxon here?” inquired the girl.

Mr. Fowler shook his head modestly.

“Oh no, that would never do,” he said; “all the traditions of the place would be upset. No; the man who does the Anglo-Saxon is the b-b-best musician we have in the place. His knowledge of musical manuscripts is something wonderful.”

There did not seem to be anything more to be said after this, yet neither of them seemed disposed to break off their

interview. At last, after many blushes and considerable perturbation of mind, Mr. Fowler asked—

“Ex-ex-excuse me, but what subject do you like best—for study—that is, I mean,” he hurriedly explained.

“Oh, you’ll tell some one if I say what it is, or laugh at me,” said the girl, raising her childish eyes to his face.

“N-n-no ; never. I couldn’t think of such a thing. I—I never laughed at anybody in my life,” said Mr. Fowler, in dismay at the bare accusation.

“Well, then,” said the young lady sinking her voice, “it’s—but I’m sure you’ll be disgusted—it’s plain sewing.”

“No, really, is it ?” said Mr. Fowler. “W-w-why, how very charming !—at least, I mean, so nice, you know.”

“And you are not shocked ?” said the girl.

“Oh dear, no ; not in the least. It—why it’s so delightfully useful, you know

—feminine ; and—and it's quite charming, I think.”

Such enthusiasm had never been roused in Mr. Fowler's breast before. He blushed again to think of it, yet somehow it was exquisite pleasure to have those blue eyes looking up at him, as if his opinion really did matter.

“I am so glad you think so,” she said with a little sigh. “I never mention it at my aunt's, where I live, because I disgusted so many friends by owning to it once. All the women I know boast that they wouldn't know how to use a needle if they had one, except in crewel work. It's one of the degrading burdens that man, the tyrant, has fastened upon woman, they say. It makes me quite ashamed to be able to sew neatly, for it shows how dreadfully far off I must be from emancipated, free, glorious woman. Now and then, for a treat, I go upstairs and lock my door and hem a pocket-

handkerchief. I always pretend I buy them ready hemmed, you know."

"Dear me, now I think it altogether so delightful of you!" said Mr. Fowler, rendered desperate by the light in the blue eyes. "Why, there is nothing I like so much as to see ladies sewing; it's—it's so delightfully domesticated, you know."

The girl shook her head again; it was a very small pretty head, with a blue bonnet on it of a deep artistic blue that contrasted well with the sunny waving hair that was drawn back to a knot below the bonnet.

"You are looking at my hair," she said. "I know it's not fashionable, but I do so hate to see hair in a mess. Aunt wants me to cut mine, but I won't; I like it smooth best."

"Oh, so do I, ever so much best!" cried Mr. Fowler, in an irrepressible burst of enthusiasm.

"But it isn't right to be domestic or

very neat," she said, with a little sorrowful shake of her head again. "Women ought to breathe the same air of free, public life as men; not be cramped like something—I forget what—in low domestic life.

Mr. Fowler was on the point of flinging himself, body, soul, and spirit, into a passionate disavowal of these sentiments, when he was interrupted by the arrival of a tall, thin, angular-looking lady, in a gown of saddest green; a long cloak of a deeper shade hung from her shoulders.

"Helen!" she said, "come quickly with me. Mr. Daffy the poet is walking about just outside, and I do so want you to admire his dear, sweet, delicate, interesting face."

"Oh, aunt, this is Mr. Fowler, and he has been so kind, he is——"

"Yes, oh yes; Tom's schoolfellow. So glad to meet you; quite too kind of you. You will come and see me on my



evenings—Thursdays. I think I have a card; yes. Miss Markham, Tom Markham's aunt, you know, your old school-fellow. So too kind of you. Now, my sweet child, really—so many thanks, good day. We shall see you on Thursday."

And the tall lady swept away with her niece in charge under a parting salute of disconnected sentences, leaving Mr. Fowler in a state of bewilderment and excitement, hitherto unprecedented in his existence.

He sat down and thought for the next hour or two over the extraordinary circumstance that had befallen him. At first he could think of nothing but the childish glance of those blue eyes. He was conscious of nothing but a vague, delicious sense of having been appealed to by those blue eyes in a way that nobody had ever appealed to him before. Mr. Fowler was by no means a vain young man, and he turned chilly at the

fearful presumption of supposing that so delightful and lovely a creature had really cared twopence-halfpenny for his opinion on anything.

Mr. Fowler walked back to Harcourt Street that afternoon in a very perturbed state of mind. For the first time in his life he forgot his umbrella, and, what was still more significant, he did not remember his loss. When Sarah Ann brought him his tea, she found him buried in a deep and gloomy scrutiny of the hearth-rug; but he started and blushed in a guilty manner, as if he had been caught doing something he ought not to have done.

That same evening Mr. Fowler went out and bought a new pair of boots, two sizes too small for him; also some gloves, superfluities of civilisation whose absence he had never noticed before. The next day he had his hair cut, and was measured for a new suit of clothes. On Saturday

he bought a hat. On Sunday he went to church three times, to three different West End churches. Mr. Fowler was ignorant, and did not know that ladies of the type of Miss Markham are often a great deal too advanced, and have far too much superior knowledge, or think they have, to go to church at all; so he missed seeing the object of his adoration, for it may as well be said at once that Mr. Fowler was desperately, foolishly, honestly, supremely, and altogether in love.

Three more dreadful days to drag through before Thursday. Mr. Fowler's soul sank within him as he made a mental calculation of the number of hours and minutes that must elapse before he saw "Helen" again. During these days he would come into the hall at ten minutes to four, and walk nervously up and down until the hands of the clock over the Grenville library pointed to the

hour. Then he would rush forward, and deposit his key with the gold-laced attendant at the entrance, and go down the steps and away to the park as fast as the new boots could take him.

Here, again, Mr. Fowler's knowledge of men and manners was at fault. Ladies like Miss Markham have, or imagine they have, far too much to do to frequent the haunts of the mere fashionable world and sit and look at the fashions. There is no fashion for them but the fashion of eccentricity.

Thursday came, as usual, directly after Wednesday, and at nine o'clock in the evening Mr. Fowler gave a modest little knock—he was quite incapable of pulling the bell too—at Miss Markham's door.

He was dreadfully taken aback by the door being flung wide open before he could get his hand back again.

“There must have been somebody there waiting on purpose,” thought the

terrified little man. "I never knew anything so alarming."

In a considerably bewildered state Mr. Fowler was ushered into a large, dimly lighted drawing-room on the first-floor, filled with people, who were all talking loudly together. The room was rendered dim and indistinct by the dark green of its walls and the number of curtains that seemed to be everywhere. After a hurried greeting from Miss Markham, who had to welcome a string of people coming after him, Mr. Fowler found himself gradually edged away into a corner behind an ottoman.

When he had sufficiently recovered his scattered senses; he looked about him for Helen; but she was nowhere to be seen. The room was so full of people that she might well be there, though invisible to him, and he stood waiting patiently in his corner until she should appear.

Nobody seemed to notice him at all.

The ladies on the ottoman gossiped—we beg their pardon, discussed in a cheerful manner such light subjects as the state of the existing land laws, and how much better they would be with *their* improvements added, or they demonstrated to some neophyte the inestimable advantages that would accrue upon an extension of the electoral franchise. When they wished to unbend and descend to the level of mere ordinary intellects, they talked of current literature and its influence upon the masses.

Mr. Fowler could not help hearing their conversation, and they did not appear to have the slightest objection to his or any one else's doing so, for they all talked at the top of their voices.

Mr. Fowler was rather confused by what he heard, and his soul sank lower and lower. A horrible sense of his own utter incapacity to sustain for five minutes the sort of conversation to which he listened

overcame him. What should he do if that adorable creature, with the heavenly blue eyes, asked him for his opinion on the existing land laws? From his personal experience he had no reason to believe there were any. He felt that he would not show to much better advantage should she engage him in conversation respecting the extension of the franchise. He actually did not know if he had a vote or not. What would she think of him?

He edged away to another corner, hoping that in that part of the room he might hear subjects with which he was more familiar talked about; but he was even worse confounded there. Everybody within hearing was violently airing his or her condemnatory opinion of the Married Women's Property Law. This being Mr. Fowler's first introduction to the knowledge that such a law existed, he felt utterly crushed by the appalling



amount of ignorance he laboured under. He began to think of retiring from the presence of so much learning, and as his eyes wandered towards the door, they met those well-remembered blue eyes on a voyage of discovery too.

To his dying day Mr. Fowler never knew how he did it; but all at once he was beside the owner of the blue eyes, and was holding her hand, but only for a moment. He was much too modest to do more than give it a conventional little grasp, and then he dropped it.

“I am so glad you remembered to come,” said Helen, looking at him in the same innocent way as she had looked at him in the dingy, dusty museum. “I was afraid you would forget all about it.”

“I—I that is, I have n-n-n-never thought about anything else,” Mr. Fowler stammered forth; and then covered himself with confusion, as with a cloak, in his

fear at having said something he ought not.

But the blue eyes only sought his in a little inquiring sort of way, and Helen said—

“I think there are some chairs in that window, and I am so tired.”

“Oh, so am I. I mean—that is, d-d-d-dreadfully tired before you—at least, I—I was just now;” and in an excess of agony Mr. Fowler stepped upon Helen’s dress, and drew a few yards of frilling off it in his endeavours to disentangle his feet.

“Oh, it doesn’t matter a bit!” cried that young lady, as, blushing and stammering and desperately miserable, Mr. Fowler made elaborate failures at an apology. “We can sit down here, and I will pin it up. I can mend it myself, you know,” she added in a lower tone; “and it will be so nice.”

The chairs that Helen had indicated

were two cleverly placed low seats in the recess of a window, partly shaded by some curtains. Once out of the full observation of the talking crowd, Mr. Fowler recovered himself a little, but not sufficiently to open a conversation. The talk to which he had been listening, and his unlucky stumble, had effectively driven for the time even his mother tongue from him. After an interval of some minutes, during which his companion was as silent as himself, he managed to pull himself together, and ask in a hesitating manner—

“ I—I s-s-s-suppose you are very much interested about the l-l-l-land laws, Miss Helen ? ”

The blue eyes were raised in childlike wonder to his face.

“ Oh dear ! ” she said, with something like a pout, “ you are just one of them after all, then. I did *hope* that you did not care for all those things. I thought

you were going to be somebody nice for me to talk to."

"Oh, I—I assure you!" cried Mr. Fowler, wildly, "I—I don't know anything at all ab-b-b-bout the subject, only I thought, of course, you must."

"No, I don't; I hate it all. I don't care what the laws are, or who makes them, so that they will leave me alone."

"No m-m-more do I. I—I am so glad you don't."

"You don't know anything about the higher education of women either, do you?" asked Helen, a little doubtfully.

"I—I assure you I d-d-d-didn't even know they had any," responded her admirer ardently. "I—I think all women ought to be like you, Miss Helen. I—I do indeed. I—I adore plain sewing; I do, really."

"Hush!" said Helen; then bending forward a little, she said, "Hush! but my name isn't really Helen, and I should like

*you* to call me by my real name. I was christened Nellie, after poor dear mamma, who is dead; but aunt said no woman who ever did anything for the honour and dignity of her sex ever was, or could be, called such a silly, frivolous name. She said there had been grand, majestic, queenly Helens, a glory to their womanhood, and so she always calls me Helen, in the hope, I suppose, that I may do something dignified some day; but I never shall, I know, and I like Nellie so much better."

"Oh, so do I!" rapturously exclaimed Mr. Fowler. "I think it is the lo-lo-loveliest name in all the world."

"Then you will call me Nellie?"

Mr. Fowler was on the point of protesting, with all the emotion of a bursting soul, that to do so would afford him more delight than all the other joys of life rolled into one, or of using some other equally fervid expression of the same

kind, when he was prevented from saying anything at all by the interposition of a manly form between himself and the object of his attentions.

“ Oh, Helen, dear!” said the new-comer, coolly, “ your aunt is looking for you, I think. She sent me for you. How awfully hot this corner must be! You look quite rosy.”

Certainly it must have been very warm there, for not only was Helen’s face of a rosy red, but Mr. Fowler’s was literally scarlet; yet Helen protested, as she was led away upon the stranger’s arm, that she was not hot, not at all hot. For one moment Mr. Frederick Fowler thought of rushing after that young man and felling him to the ground, rescuing the young lady from him, and flying with her light form in his arms down the stairs and out into the night. The next moment he took out his pocket-handkerchief and wiped his brow, and drew

further back into the recess of the window.

Who was this objectionable stranger? Mr. Fowler felt sure that the owner of the loveliest name in the world had not wished to go with him, for she frowned a little as she went away. He had called her "Helen"—there was great comfort in that; *he* had been asked to call her "Nellie," and she had looked at him as she made the request. Was it possible? No; her eyes must have that sweet look in them always. He was a fool! And so in alternate bliss and wretchedness Mr. Fowler passed an unquiet hour.

The entrance of light refreshments, borne on trays by servants, caused a temporary rearrangement of the company, and in the moving about Mr. Fowler saw for a brief instant the one young lady of his thoughts. She was at the further end of the second drawing-room,



sitting beside an elderly man, who appeared to be talking to her of something that did not particularly interest her; for Mr. Fowler could have sworn (only he never did swear) that he saw her eyes move towards the corner he was in.

Without a moment's hesitation he rose and glided between the intervening ladies and gentlemen straight up to her side, and, without stopping to think of what he was about, for he would most certainly have faltered and stammered if he had, he said—

“Miss Nellie, what can I have the pleasure of bringing you?”

“Thank you, I will take a sandwich,” said Miss Nellie.

And then, when Mr. Fowler, all in a glow of excitement and delight, brought the sandwich to her, the old gentleman, seeing very plainly that he was not wanted, did as all old gentlemen should,

and moved out of the way. Whereupon Nellie's eyes turned to the vacant seat in such a very unmistakable manner that Mr. Fowler promptly sat upon it.





## CHAPTER VII.

MRS. EVEREST accompanied David to town at the end of December, when he went up for his examinations. Mr. Burney had made a faint offer of doing so, but was quenched by an allusion to his Sundays, and the opinion that they would spend all their time in the British Museum and forget all about the examination. This remark was fraught with so much truth that the rector blushed as if he had been detected in some unlawful act, and thus further provoked his sister into stating her belief that what he wished was for the boy to fail, and a guilty conscience here asserted itself so overpoweringly that Mr.

Burney's sole method of war, retreat, was alone open to him.

For reasons of her own, Mrs. Everest was determined her son should not fail, and even sent him for three weeks' cramming to a celebrated coach. Whether by his means or in spite of him is not known, but David did pass his examination, and was formally appointed.

Mrs. Everest, as she had found the appointment and the tutor for her son, also found his lodgings. While David was with his tutor, she traversed miles of dismal streets with that object. She was difficult to please, but she was pleased at last ; for Harcourt Street combined within its precincts all the undesirablenesses that had existed separately in all the other streets she had visited. It was old and dirty, noisy yet dull, swarming with children, and overrun with costermongers, hand-organs, and cats.

Mrs. Everest tried two or three houses

in the street, but Mrs. Dodds, at No. 16, exceeded all the other landladies in acidity of aspect and shrillness of voice, so Mrs. Everest promptly engaged her vacant first-floor, and, with an energy that characterised all that worthy lady's proceedings, beat down Mrs. Dodds's terms to the very last halfpenny, thus preparing a very cordial reception for her son.

David did not seem quite so much disgusted with the shabby, dirty little rooms as his mother had expected. He said they would do very well, and then apparently dismissed the subject from his mind.

"Never mind," she thought to herself. "He may pretend he does not care at first, but I know he will hate the constant noise and fuss, and the dirt and untidiness—brought up as he has been he cannot fail to do so; and he will hate the regular hours, and that fussy chief clerk, and those silly young men; and I am sure

he will not get his meals nicely. He will soon be tired of it all and come home disgusted, and then—dear Fanny !”

So Mrs. Everest settled herself comfortably in the corner of the first-class carriage on her way home, and congratulated herself at having at last found the right way to treat her wayward son. If he would not be amenable to reason, and do what his mother knew was for his own happiness, he should taste by bitter experience that there are worse lots in life than to marry an heiress and be a country gentleman.

She smiled as she thought of the dirt and shabbiness of the dreary little sitting-room ; and the very next day went up with Fanny to the Hall, and threw the windows of the drawing-room open, and contrasted in her own mind David’s room and these spacious, handsomely furnished apartments, and was very well pleased with her plans.

But what is dirt to a scholar? That graceless David actually revelled in it. He gloried in finding his papers in the morning exactly as he had left them overnight. It was a state of savagery that he enjoyed. It never gave him a qualm of disgust that his muddy boots reposed on the sofa, or his pipes among the bread and butter on the sideboard, or that dirty teacups remained for days upon his mantelpiece. His room speedily became the den that scholars delight in, and David sat within it and grubbed among his dusty papers, and devoured his books with his meals, and was as free and happy as possible.

There was one great thing about David's lodgings that Mrs. Everest had overlooked—they were not more than ten minutes from the British Museum. David went from his office straight to the reading-room every day, and stayed there until it closed. Our hero never troubled



himself about the morrow, but enjoyed the present in a way that would have saddened his mother's soul had she but known it.

David, therefore, became one of the regular stream of readers that pours into the great round room every day, and, like the majority of them, took very little heed of his fellows. Yet some of them were well worth the looking at. Perhaps as curious a collection of humanity comes out through the swing glass doors at the closing hour as can be seen in any part of the globe. East and West, savage and sage, jostle each other. Great scientists and needy penny-a-liners; lights of history and compilers of sixpenny sermons; wonderful old fogies, each with one particular craze more astounding than those of his fellows; young ladies who go to read novels, and to look at old fashion-books; students of every subject under the sun; and astonishing

old ladies, who manage to pick up a living—they only know how—by doing odd jobs of copying, and finding out the authors of hymns and quotations. Last, not least—for, alas! there are many of them—the men who have been barristers, clergymen, scholars, gentlemen—God only knows what they are now!—who, day after day and year after year, hang about the great room, and copy, and compare, and make notes, and do any odd jobs that any one will give them for a few pence. They get shabbier and shabbier. In the winter their pinched, drawn faces are dreadful to see. They come with the first opening of the doors, and painfully drag themselves away the very last at night. The place is home and warmth and light to them. What becomes of them when they go out in the bitter, fog-laden air is a problem to puzzle the tender-hearted. They are well known by sight to the more respectable readers,

who generally prefer taking seats at a little distance from them, for reasons better imagined than described.

David being a new-comer, and one never disposed to observe his neighbours nicely, had on several occasions taken a seat beside a very good specimen of the class we have referred to. He was an old man, with a grey beard, and rather long grey hair that fell over his greasy coat collar. He had light-blue eyes, red and wrinkled about the lids, and inclined to wateriness at the corners; a haggard, hungry expression of face that would have been fierce if there had been more power in it. He stooped a good deal, and had very nervous, restless, long claw-like hands. His clothing had originally been a good black cloth suit—it must have been a good one to have held together during the years that it had appeared in the reading-room; it was very shiny, very greasy, very

frayed at the edges now. Contrary to the habits of most of his *confrères*, he wore a wisp of yellow shirt-collar at his neck; but his boots were so old, so patched, so broken, that it was a marvel how he kept them upon his feet.

Tradition spoke of his having come there in the same garb many years ago. He had been very bright and hopeful then, and had been apt to talk of his estates in the country, and the handsome reward he would give to any man who would find a certain certificate or deed for him. By degrees he talked less; now he rarely spoke to any one, but continued his ceaseless, restless comparing and shifting and turning of papers.

David and he might have sat beside each other for ten years and become no better acquainted, but for a trifling accident. The old man had been angry and querulous at some little mistake made by an attendant, and had spoken roughly to

the man. He was subject to these little outbreaks of temper, and they were generally passed by unheeded; but this was a new attendant, and one not sufficiently trained in patience for the ways of the place. He answered the old man, and a little quarrel ensued, which ended in the attendant's applying to a pale, fair-haired young man with a book in his hand, who happened to be passing by at the time.

"Mr. Fowler," the man said, "stop a minute, sir, please. You hear what I am a-being called?"

"I—I have no authority to interfere," stammered the little man, nervously; "you should apply to the s-s-s-superintendent;" and he was just gliding on his inoffensive way when David looked up.

"Why, Fowler!" he exclaimed. "Is Saul also among the prophets? Why, how came you here in the middle of all these books?"

"E-E-E-Everest!" stuttered Mr.

Fowler. "Well, I am delighted! How very ch-ch-ch-charming, to be sure;" and he modestly held out his hand an inch or two.

David seized it and grasped it.

"Not taken to literature, have you?" he asked.

"I—I am an as-as-as-assistant here, junior assistant," replied Mr. Fowler. "C-c-come and see my place, won't you? I left the P-p-probate Court and came here f-f-four years ago."

"Of course," said David, rising. "But what about our friends here?" he added, pausing; for both the old man and the attendant were apparently waiting for them to say something.

"Oh, it's a-a-all right," said Mr. Fowler. "Jacobs, better get what Mr. Thorold wants. He is a n-n-new hand, sir; you must excuse him," he added to the old man, as the young one went off.

"New hand," muttered the old man.

“He is insolent, insolent. Because I have an old coat on, they all think they may insult me with impunity. As if a gentleman has not a right to wear an old coat if he likes. Insolent, insolent; they are all in a cabal against me. But I will be even with them one day—even with them one day. I’ll make it a matter for parliamentary inquiry. As if a gentleman might not wear an old coat! A coat does not make a gentleman!”

And they left the angry old man muttering to himself.

“Curious old fellow,” was David’s remark.

“Y-ye-yes. He is very much to be pitied, I believe,” said little Fowler, unlocking a private door in the wall, and ushering his companion into what looked like a series of immense iron cages filled with books, and piled one above the other for several stories. “He lodges in the same house that I do, and has a little



girl. He is, or thinks he is, heir to some property, I believe. This is the i-i-iron work, you see ; my place is through here and down below. I—I—I really am delighted to see you, Everest."

David nodded.

" You must look me up," he said.

Mr. Fowler blushed with delight. His visit to David's home had been the only visit he had ever made in his life. He had not been a clever boy at school, and though he was some years older than David, the latter had been ahead of him when he left school ; besides this, David's half-contemptuous kindness, being the only kindness he had ever received, had made a lasting impression on Mr. Fowler, and he regarded David as among the cleverest and kindest of mankind, and had often longed to meet him again ; but he had not heard anything of him since his visit to Broodleigh, for David never answered letters if he could help it.

“I—I—I shall be most happy,” he stammered. “M-my address is No. 16, Harcourt Street. If you will come and see me, I—I shall be only too delighted!”

David laughed as he leaned against Mr. Fowler’s table.

“That is rather a joke,” he remarked, “for I am lodging in No. 16, Harcourt Street.”

“Y-you don’t say so? Well, that is delightful!”

“Just so,” said David; “and our friend the patriarch makes us a cheerful trio. What do you do down here? Play at pitch and toss with the specimens, or be an amateur Adam and name the stones of the earth and the shells of the sea?”

“Oh dear, no!” cried Mr. Fowler, quite aghast. “I am only a j-j-j-junior, you know. I register the acquisitions, and do very little classification.”

“It must be a lively lot of acquisitions,

to judge from the specimens," said David, looking with an air of great disgust upon a heap of odds and ends of natural history on the table ; and he seated himself upon what might, or might not, have been a valuable relic of the præ-Adamite period.

"E-e-excuse me, Everest, my dear fellow," cried Mr. Fowler, in an agony of apprehension, as David stretched out his long legs, "b-b-but I—I believe—I am afraid, that is, that—that is a most in-in-interesting specimen of—of palæozoic fauna."

"It must be dead by this time," observed David, soothingly, "so I can't hurt its feelings."

"I—I dare say, my dear fellow ; b-b-but it might get us into all sorts of complications. There was a man here once—a v-v-very nice fellow—and a friend came to see him, and most u-un-unfortunately he sat down upon a case of b-b-butterflies, and of course they all s-s-smashed directly ;

and the man who was in charge m-m-mended them, and did it very cleverly, I as-as-assure you, b-b-but somehow he got the wr-wrong wings on to the wrong bodies, and it m-m-made quite a sensation in the e-e-entomological world—until they found out what had happened.”

“Well, I have no enthusiasm about antediluvian oysters,” said David, getting up; “but if you could tell me anything about liturgies, now that would be interesting.”

“I—I—I don’t know anything about them myself,” said Mr. Fowler, “but there is a m-m-man in the Manuscript Department who knows all about them. He generally catalogues modern state papers. I—I—I can introduce you to him.”

“Thanks,” said David; “but I have made his acquaintance already. The Superintendent of the Reading-Room knows everything in the world except

liturgies, and this man knows all about them, so they form an encyclopædia of useful knowledge between them. But I must go off now. I'll look you up to-night." And David departed to his books.





## CHAPTER VIII.

“OH, Miss 'Achard, Mr. Heverest's compliments, and he'll be glad to know if the coffin is nearly nailed up.”

This from Sarah Ann, who, with a grimy apron before her mouth, opened the artist's door, and thrust her head in one February evening.

“Lor!” said Miss Hatchard. “Well, I never; a coffin! I suppose it's 'is fun, though I can't say I see much fun in coffins myself; but there, I must pack these pictures to-night. Tell him——”

But Sarah Ann was gone, not considering it her business to carry messages from the second-floor lodger.

“I suppose nailing is disturbing jest

over your head," sighed the poor little woman; "but, then, what can I do? If I don't send off these pictures to-night, Moses won't take 'em, I'm sure."

"Shall I go and tell him we shall not be very long?" asked Fiametta, who was kneeling on the floor beside a half-finished packing-case.

"Well, if you would, my dear. If you don't mind, that is."

"I don't mind a bit," said the girl, rising. "I shall rather like it. What business has he to complain of noise? I dare say he does nothing but idle his time. He is a gentleman, I suppose. If he came up here and helped, it would be some good;" and Fiametta carried her flashing head down the stairs.

She did not knock at the door. She considered it derogatory to do so. So she opened it in her decisive manner, and, without advancing a step, she remarked—



“I have come to tell you that the artist who lives upstairs is obliged to pack up some pictures to-night; and if you don’t like the noise and have nothing to do, you had better go out until it is over.”

David looked up from his book and gazed at the girl in the doorway in some surprise. Perhaps the laughter in his eyes angered her; for she said—

“I am not surprised at any gentleman laughing at women who have hard work to do. I expected that; but we can’t stop our work to suit your dainty ears.”

“So you take me for a gentleman,” said David, sweetly. “You have a very quick perception to find that out at once. But, like the rest of your sex, my dear, you do not draw a truly logical deduction from that premise. If you have any hard work to do, I shall come and help you do it.”

The girl blushed, and a curious baffled

expression came into her dark solemn eyes. She looked a little uncomfortable, and evidently did not know what to say. Seeing him rise and come towards her, she turned abruptly, and shut the door after her and ran upstairs again.

“He says he is coming to help,” she exclaimed, breathlessly, to Miss Hatchard. “But that was only a polite lie; aristocrats always lie to women.”

“So they do, my child,” said David, as he came to the top of the stairs. “They tell them they are angels; we know better, don’t we? Madam, I am rejoiced to hear that I was in error about the coffin. If you will allow me to help you nail up that box, I think it will be to the advantage of all parties. Your sex is admirable in many ways, but sound carpentering is a privilege of the stronger animal called man. Oblige me with the hammer.”

“Well, I am sure,” observed Miss

Hatchard, considerably mystified by the stranger's address—"I am sure I am very much obliged; my nails never do go in straight."

"For the simple reason, my dear madam, that neither you nor any other woman ever hit a nail, physically or metaphorically, on the head. Now, let us set to work."

And they did set to work, and a vast amount of packing and nailing was accomplished under David's direction and assistance. When the last case was securely finished, Miss Hatchard tendered her thanks.

"I am very glad to have been of use to you," he said. "Any time that you want anything done, except painting a picture, I am at your service—even to speaking the truth, Miss Fiametta," he said, turning to the girl, for he had learnt her name.

She blushed and looked confused.

“All men tell lies,” she said.

“So, Heaven be praised! do all women,” said David, seriously. “It is a privilege of the human race; without it we should be no better than the beasts. Good evening, ladies;” and he went downstairs.

“What a very odd little girl!” he said to himself. “The daughter of the one-coated patriarch who does not wash, I suppose, and as full of fads as he is. I like that sturdy little artist; there is no affectation of superiority with her. She is the genuine article, as the Creator made her, and has stuck to it.”

“What a affable young man!” was Miss Hatchard’s comment, as David went into his room; “and sich a gentleman!”

“Why do you consider it is ‘affable’ in a strong young man to come and help two women do hard man’s work? I think it would have been brutal of him if he had not come. If he had been a working

man who was going to be paid for it, you would not have considered him 'affable.' It is just because he sets up for belonging to a superior race that you do as everybody does, and bow down before him, and say, 'Oh, how amiable and good of you to deign to cast a glance upon us poor creatures! Bah! If Moses had sent a man to pack those pictures, you would not have thanked him.'

"Well, I dunno. You see, he would have been paid for it," said Miss Hatchard, dubiously; for the girl's fiery speeches always made her a little nervous.

Fiametta bit her lip.

"And this man ought to have been paid for it," she said.

"Oh, you couldn't offer him no money," said the artist, aghast. "He is a gentleman; he would be insulted. I wouldn't say so to 'im for the world, and so kind as he was!"

"He was not kind; it was only his

common duty," persisted Fiametta, changing her ground. "But he ought to be paid, or he will think he has conferred a favour upon us."

"Well, so he has," responded the elder woman, as she took two teacups out of a cupboard. "I ain't above taking favours. Stay and have a cup o' tea, child?"

"No."

"Lor, don't be so contrariwise."

"I didn't do the packing, and I won't have the tea."

"Well, do it out o' friendliness, then, to keep me company?"

"No, Miss Hatchard," said the girl, and there was a touch of sadness in her tone, "I won't do that either. I can't ask you back, and I have not done any work for you to-day. Let me keep the only thing I have got;" and she went out, and shut the door after her.

"If I had that there father of hers," said Miss Hatchard to herself, as she

flourished the knife with which she was cutting bread and butter, "I'd—I'd—I dunno what I wouldn't do to 'im. Keeping that 'ere fine girl hanging around with no meat, nor no clothes, nor no nothink, and all because of his fads and fancies. Oh my, if I had the fashioning of 'im!" and Miss Hatchard sliced off a tremendous round of bread, as if it had been the offending Mr. Thorold's head.

She sat over her tea a long time. Her studio was a shabby, bare little place, uncarpeted and uncurtained. There was an easel, and a table covered with paints, and scraps of paper, and nails, and bits of dry crust, and all manners of odds and ends. There were one or two chairs, and some rough boxes, and rolls of paper, and old canvasses, and unfinished drawings, and rough sketches were piled in the corners and fastened on the walls and stacked under the table. There was nothing picturesque or beautiful in the



place. It was a mere workshop, where very ordinary work was ground out of a very ordinary little woman at a remarkably cheap rate.

Miss Hatchard designed wall papers, patterns for chintzes and cretonnes, all very third and fourth rate. Now and then she painted panels for the Christmas card kind of furniture that was just coming in fashion, or designed Christmas cards themselves, or inferior cheap stained glass. All she did was very ordinary and cheap, yet as good as she could make it; and perhaps in all London there was not a busier, brighter, more helpful, contented, underpaid little woman than Miss Hatchard.

She thought a good deal about the girl who had left her. She had little time to bestow on the wants or fancies of any girl. Her own hard life was quite enough to occupy her attention, yet she did spend a good deal of time thinking about

Fiametta. Nay, she did better than that, she helped her. Silver and gold had she none, but such as she had she gave her.

It was a good deal for the solitary, brooding child to have the studio to come to after the dreadful garret, where so much of her existence had been passed ; it was still more for her to have Miss Hatchard's bright little presence, and to hear her kindly chatter. Her grammar might not be above reproach, her pronunciation was very far from correct ; yet she was, on the whole, a most excellent companion for the morbid girl. She would get nothing morbid from the artist.

Now and then when she had a figure to paint, Fiametta stood for her, and when she had done this, she consented to partake of a meal as payment for the same, but otherwise she would never so much as break bread in the little room.

Miss Hatchard had many a time debated within her mind the advisability of

her attacking the stronghold, that is to say, encountering Mr. Thorold, and trying to persuade him to allow the girl to do what she most desired, namely, to work for her living; but hitherto she had not done so. She was not fond of interfering in other people's affairs, but pity for the lonely, wasted life was urging her on.

To-night the unusual sadness in Fiametta's voice had decided her. She knew the girl was hungry, and had been hungry all day, for her father had left no money behind him that morning. He was out late that evening. Was it possible that the girl would have to go hungry to bed?

Miss Hatchard could not bear the thought. She set her door a little open, and sat and listened. It was dark. She heard a slow, heavy footfall at the foot of the stairs; she knew the step, it was old Mr. Thorold's. She waited until he came

to the landing outside her room, and then opened the door wide and confronted him.

“If so be as I shouldn’t hinder you with Fiametta’s supper,” she began, “I should like a word with you, sir.”

“Eh, who is it?” he said, peering into the dusk. “Is it Miss Hatchard?” He had heard a little about her from his daughter, but had never spoken to her before.

“Yes; it’s me,” said the owner of the name. “Will you step in? Now, look around ’ere. I’ve a decent roof over my head—two roofs, t’other second back across the landing—enough to eat and enough to wear, and a shillin’ or two over sometimes, though that’s not often; and who ’ave I got to thank for it? Myself; that’s all about it, that is. I works for myself and am beholden to nobody. Now, what I can do another can do, perhaps better. I don’t hold myself up for no pattern, but what I do say is this ’ere, if I can do this,

that fine girl of yours can do the same and better."

The old man had stood listening with some surprise to this little address; he had not understood the drift of it before the last sentence, and that angered him.

"And you compare my daughter, the child of a long line of illustrious ancestors, to *you*," he said; "Miss Thorold, the last of an old house, to a fifth-rate painter in a garret!"

"It ain't a garret," interposed the little woman, eagerly. "Lor, Mr. Thorold, don't be put out like. I don't mean no comparisons, but I do say as a girl with health and strength is better a earning of her own livin' than being dependant."

"Miss Thorold is not dependent," said her father, angrily. "She, we, are in temporary difficulties just at present—mere temporary difficulties. Miss Thorold is a young lady of property, of family. You do not understand what you are talking

about. Miss Thorold work ! Impossible, ridiculous ! ”

“ It ain’t impossible for her to starve,” said the artist, bluntly.

He trembled, and looked wildly about him as if in terrified search for something that he feared.

“ No, no,” he said, huskily ; “ it will come before then. I am on the right track, the right track now. But women have no patience, no patience at all. Has she been complaining to you ? ” he asked fiercely.

“ Lor, no,” replied Miss Hatchard ; “ she don’t never make no complaint about herself—about herself in particular, that is. She ain’t quite what you might call contented. ’Ow should she be, bein’ in idleness all her days ? ” she added astutely.

“ She will soon have plenty to do, plenty to do,” said the old man, turning to go up the narrow garret stairs. “ The

management of a large estate is not an easy task, and she must learn to do it, for she will be my sole heir. Everything I have will go to her. But she must have patience, patience," and he went on muttering until he was hidden by the winding stairs from Miss Hatchard's view.







## CHAPTER IX.

DAVID's work at his office was not of a very laborious nature. He was supposed to be there at ten in the morning; but as David breakfasted at that hour, he found it more convenient to get there at eleven instead. This was not quite in accord with the traditions of the place, so he encountered some opposition on the part of the superior officials before he could get it established as a habit. But David's imperturbable good temper and easy nature stood him in as good stead in this crisis as in many an encounter with his mother. What was the use of rating a man who smiled in a lovable manner at

every reproof, and acknowledged his errors, and promised amendment with the same cheerfulness that another man would take an extra holiday, and immediately afterwards would convulse his hearers with laughter at some quaint remark or humorous anecdote? It was not in the nature even of officials to carry on that sort of campaign many weeks, and gradually they fell into the habit of all good chiefs, and winked at what they knew they had better not see.

This point being comfortably established, David found out what was the average amount of work done by the men in his room, and performed his share. He discovered that a great deal of attention was paid to the sharpening of pencils and the neat arrangement of papers in the mornings. After that some figures were added up, and deducted from, and turned upside down and inside out, and fractioned, and divided, and halved, and

quartered, and put through all the facings that figures are capable of, preparatory to being presented to the admiring gaze of the general public.

There was an impression in the office that the most intense anxiety prevailed in the public mind with regard to the weighty subject of registered statistics, and that somehow or other the British lion would roar in a very awful manner if these interesting columns of figures were not duly presented for his approval. The author of this ingenious tradition has never been discovered, but if he had been a tribute of respect ought certainly to have been paid to his memory, for doubtless it was his beneficent invention that kept many a young and promising civil servant's intellect unimpaired by this semblance of an interest in the awful contortions of figures that were daily presented to him.

David, who had about as much natural

love of figures as a tom cat has for a terrier, was a good deal bored at first with his work. Antiquaries are seldom good mathematicians; the combination is not a happy one. Mathematics may surely be considered an exact science; while antiquarianism, besides not being a science at all, is so notoriously inexact that no two members of the profession have ever been known to agree on any one subject since it was first invented. Therefore David was not happy among figures.

Yet he was not unhappy either. That wise and beautiful fiction about the British public, it is true, failed to touch him one little bit. David cared no more for the British public that it did for him. He had actually no love even for the great unwashed section of it. He had only one feeling about them, namely, that he wished they would keep away from wherever he was; thus he was no politician, for all shades of politicians love, or say they love,

the dirty three quarters of humanity. So he derived no comfort from that source, but his comfort came from outside his work. He positively revelled among the books in the British Museum. He read them there all the time he could, and read his notes of them at home in the evenings, and worked out most beautiful and interesting details about the connection between the obscure Ephesine family of liturgies and the Hispano-Gallican service books, as exemplified in the Mozarabic rite and the fragments of the ancient use of France, as well as a theory of his own, highly interesting and grandly original, on the subject of the primitive form of liturgy established by the apostles before their separation, evolved from a comparative study of all extant modes of Christian worship. If these things will not console a man for playing hide and seek with figures for five hours a day, that man must indeed be dead to human joys.

So Mrs. Everest's well-meant efforts failed ; and David was happy, very happy, and wrote such letters to his uncle that the old man seemed to have taken out a new lease of life, so proud was he of his nephew. And as for Fanny, David thought no more about her in the way of love than he did of his uncle's sermons. Yet he did think of Fanny, too. Even liturgies and statistics do not make up for the lack of fresh air. Country bred David found the foggy streets and stifling rooms oppressive in March, after three months of London life. In the evenings after he came back from the Museum he felt the need of fresh air. The nearest place where an imitation of the sort was offered to the public was Regent's Park, and thither David used to go after he had finished his tea in the evenings.

He had never objected to solitary walks in the country, indeed, Fanny's enforced presence had greatly bored him at first,



but of late, as we know, he had found her a very useful grindstone on which to sharpen his wits. He would soon have got used to walking by himself in quiet lanes, no doubt, but the crowds that throng every part of the Regent's Park at sunset made him feel more lonely than ever. He could not think with a stream of people constantly passing him, but he could talk if he had anybody to talk to. He tried asking little Fowler for a night or two to accompany him, but Mr. Fowler's one idea of conversation at present was the perfection of the divine Nellie, and David found that, on the whole, he preferred loneliness to the nine hundredth repetition of the goddess's attributes, so but for an accident he might have walked his walks to the lonely end.

He met Fiametta as he was coming out of his room one glowing evening in March. She had been out to post a letter for Miss Hatchard, and was looking pale



and heavy-eyed, as though she had been crying.

“What is the matter, my dear?” said David to her, kindly. He always treated her as a little girl, arguing from the masculine premise that any female who wore frocks over the tops of her boots must be a little girl, however tall she might be.

“Nothing is the matter,” said the girl.

“Now we can talk face to face. You told me I was a liar, you remember; permit me to insinuate that you deviate from the truth. You know you have a headache; I can see it in your eyes.”

The girl’s eyes flashed as he said this. It was curious to watch the sudden lighting up of the dark, sullen caverns and the equally rapid disappearance of the wrathful brilliancy.

“It is nothing to you if I have,” she said.

“Well, no; and mine is nothing to you,” said David, with a sigh, half turning to go down the stairs. “I was hoping you would help me get rid of mine. I suffer frightfully from headache; but there, it’s nothing to—— Good evening, Miss Fiametta;” and David’s blue eyes gave a mournful glance upwards from under their long lashes.

Fiametta hesitated. She had passed him, and was standing some few stairs above him. She saw the pathetic look, as David intended she should do. She paused in her upward movement, and a swift rush of red dyed her face. She seemed uncertain what to do.

“I was just trying to crawl out for a little,” said David, gently. “I feel the want of fresh air so frightfully here; but the streets and parks are so full of people it makes me melancholy to go among them by myself, and being melancholy increases my headache. But in London

nobody cares to take pity on a stranger. Good night."

Fiametta came down a step or two.

"Have you nobody to go with you?" she asked.

"No, nobody at all," he answered mournfully; "unless——" He smiled and looked up.

"I will come if you like," she said hastily.

He took her hand and tucked it under his arm.

"That's right," he said; "come along."

"You have taken me in," she said, trying to get her hand free. "I don't believe you have a headache at all. You are insulting me;" and she struggled to get away from him.

"Upon my word and honour," he said, stopping in the street, and laying his other hand upon hers that was still within his arm, while he looked straight into her eyes, "I shall be sincerely obliged to you

if you will come for a walk with me. I am really lonely, and I should like your company, my child."

She blushed again, but looked him steadily in the face.

"Won't you be friends with me, little girl?" he said tenderly.

"You don't really want me for a friend," she said. "What good can I be to you? I am poor and friendless; you are a gentleman, with rich relations and friends and money. I am not rich, and would not be if I could."

"Neither am I?" he said. "Shall I tell you about my people?"

"If you like."

"Very well, then. Here beginneth the first chapter of the history of David. Ahem! Excuse me, my dear, old habits are not easily broken; for many years I have read the first and second lessons at morning service. Well, to continue, I will tell you all about me, and you

shall tell me all about you." And David and his new friend were among the last to leave the inner park that evening before the gates were shut.

"Where ever 'ave you been, Fiametta?" said Miss Hatchard, coming out of her studio in the dusk of the spring night, as she heard the girl coming up the stairs.

"For a walk in the park with Mr. Everest," replied the girl, pausing before the door.

"Lor! Well, I never! Did he ask you to go?"

"Do you suppose I should have gone otherwise?"

"Well, no; I don't suppose you would. But what did he ask you for?"

"Because I happened to be on the stairs when he was going out, and he wanted somebody to talk to; anybody would have done."

Miss Hatchard looked inquisitively at

the girl. There was not a trace of colour or embarrassment upon her face.

“Lor!” ejaculated that lady; “and what ’ull your par say?”

“What he likes. I am old enough to choose my own walks and my own companions. Besides, he will consider that Mr. Everest is the only person in the house who is really fit to speak to me. Don’t you know that he is a gentleman, and I am a lady?”

“Yes; but then your par may say that for a *young* gent and a young lady to go walking about ain’t——”

“Bah!” said the girl, with such disgust in her tone that it made the little artist jump. Fiametta slowly lifted her hand, and a glitter like steel came into her Italian eyes. “Do you see,” she said, “if by keeping my hand up for a second I could save his or any aristocrat’s head from the noose—which is more ignominious than the block—I would bring it down

so ; ” and she let it fall on the banisters with a blow that made the crazy rail rattle. Then, without waiting for a reply, went rapidly upstairs into the garret.

Her father was sitting there turning over and over his scraps of paper upon the table, and jotting down notes in the corners of them, and being generally employed in making himself believe he was busy.

“ Fiametta, my child, I am getting on now, getting on. We shall soon establish our claim now, my dear.”

“ I have no claim,” she said, “ on anybody, but on the earth for room, and the sky for air, and from others the right and the means to live.”

“ Ay, ay,” he answered, not listening to what she said, “ we are getting on now, getting on. Yet, Fiametta, we will deal tenderly with your cousin, deal tenderly. He has kept us out of our



inheritance and turned his face from us ; he has low blood in his veins ; his father married beneath him, poor fellow, so he cannot help it. We will show that we are of the good old stock by our magnanimity ; we will deal tenderly with him, deal tenderly.”

“I will deal tenderly with no man who has oppressed the ignorant and poor,” said the girl fiercely. “I will deal tenderly with no man who has usurped the common earth of his brethren and piled up riches with other men’s lives. Such men do not deserve to live.”

“Ha, ha, ha !” chuckled the old man. “There speaks her mother’s child—no forgiveness in the Vercelli line. Hatreds handed down from father to son, and father to son. From old Michele Vercello down to his great-great-grandson the feud with the House of Gonzaga went on. Ah, it is a fine thing to go back to our ancestors in that way, and to account for

things that in common people would only be accidental or eccentric. Ha! a fine thing, a very fine thing. So you will not be tender to our cousin. Eh, my Fiametta?"

"No," she said, "I will not. I will be tender to no man. The days for tenderness are past."

"A fine girl, a fine girl, but with a little craze in her head," he said, looking after her as she went into the inner garret and shut the door. "That comes from her mother's family, too, poor thing; the Vercelli were always a little excitable. There was never anything of that sort with the Thorolds—never; always a clear-headed, practical race—always;" and the old man fell to brooding over his papers again.





## CHAPTER X.

DAVID found his walk with Fiametta so agreeable that the following evening he determined to repeat the experiment. With this intention he presented himself in Miss Hatchard's studio, and asked to be allowed to come in and look at her pictures. Permission, of course, was readily granted, and David was soon ensconced in the only easy chair in the apartment; while the little artist made the most of the remaining light, and went on with her work of designing a wall paper from a very melancholy specimen of draggled ivy that stood in a jug on the table.

Miss Hatchard was not much delighted to see her visitor. She had been much struck by David's appearance on the night of his first introduction of himself to her; he had interested her from the first moment, but not altogether pleasantly. She seemed to have some haunting recollection of his face, yet she was perfectly certain that she had never seen him before; but every now and then some glance of his sleepy eyes, or some expression about his mouth, would send a thrill of recollection through her. Having plenty of time to think, she pondered over it a good deal, but she could in no-wise remember anything that afforded a clue to the mystery; and to-night, as he sat leaning back in her easy chair in full enjoyment of his laziness, she was so impressed by his resemblance to some one whom she remembered that she could not help asking him a question.

"You ain't never been in London before, 'ave you?" she inquired.

"Not since I was a very little boy," he replied.

"Ah, then, I can't have met you anywhere; it seems, too, as if I'd seen you before."

"It is your artistic conception of the beautiful realized," said David, languidly. "By the way, what has become of that little red-haired girl I saw here before?"

"She ain't so little; she is almost as tall as you," said Miss Hatchard, not altogether pleased at her visitor's way of speaking of the girl she had such an affection for. "Besides, she is past sixteen, and, lor, when I was sixteen I was a woman!" And Miss Hatchard sighed heavily, as if the recollection of some great trouble occurred to her.

"She wears short frocks," said David, "so she must be a little girl. Also she

is a little girl in her ways. Do you know where she is to-night ? ”

“ Gone out, I believe,” said Miss Hatchard, shortly.

“ Ah,” said David, with a gentle sigh, looking out of the window, “ it is a fine night for a walk, but I am very comfortable here. I really think that, on the whole, an open window high up is just as good as going out. May I stay here a little while ? ”

“ Of course you may, and glad of your company,” responded Miss Hatchard, completely vanquished by David’s tender melancholy. “ Are you sure you’re comfortable ? ”

“ Very, thank you. There is one, only one, other addition that could possibly be made to my comfort at the present moment. I am very happy looking at you paint and talking to you, but—but—— ”

“ I know what you mean,” said the

artist, laughing; "it's tobaccer you're after. Lor, I don't mind smoke. Bless you, I ain't been able to see across this room sometimes when young Moses drops in about a panel or two."

"Miss Hatchard, from this moment I am your slave. You are the only sensible woman I have ever met. With your kind permission I will light my pipe;" and David did so, and for a few moments was too thoroughly occupied in enjoying it to offer any further remarks on any subject. But it was not in David's nature to remain silent long when he had a woman to talk to. He liked talking to women at this period of his existence better than to men, his uncle excepted. Women had few theories of their own to oppose to his, and David did not like being contradicted, and if they were bored they did not show it so readily as men did. But to-night he was not inclined to talk of his work so much as of himself.



“My respected mother,” he said between the whiffs of his pipe as he watched the smoke curl lazily about him—“my respected, I may say, venerated mamma, has an insuperable objection to tobacco. I do not know how it is, but most worthy mammas appear to labour under an hallucination that tobacco is injurious to their offspring.”

“I suppose because it so often leads to drink,” said Miss Hatchard, putting in the leaves of her spray, “and drink, you know, ain’t good for nobody.”

“I don’t know about that,” said David. “What is the cause of most of the poverty of our great towns? Drink. Well, suppose the working man did not drink, did not get out of work, did not get imprisoned, did not die young,—what would become of all the steady men who now get good wages and thrive? The market would be overstocked, price of labour would go down. It would be an awful thing.”

“Lor!” said Miss Hatchard, pausing in her work, “I never thought o’ that.”

“No more you never ought,” said the philosopher with the pipe, “because it’s humbug.”

This unexpected reply gave a little check to the conversation; for Miss Hatchard felt mystified, and David was too lazily enjoying himself to say anything. Presently he began—

“Our young friend with the red hair.”

“It ain’t so red,” interposed Miss Hatchard. “When the sun gets it it’s quite golden.”

“Ah, that’s how it is with you artists, you see beauty in everything,” sighed David. “Nobody ever discovered before that I was an incarnation of the beautiful, though, in justice to my own intellect, I must say I always had a faint idea of the sort myself. Happy artist! Can’t you teach me to see that red hair is golden?”

Miss Hatchard looked queerly at him, but did not answer.

“Then,” pursued David, meditatively, “I might even come to regard freckles as beauty spots, and a lanky figure as truly graceful. Won’t you teach me?”

“There ain’t no need for you to learn,” said Miss Hatchard. “You’re a quiz, you are. ’Ave you got any sisters?”

“No; I am the last of my race. Melancholy, isn’t it?—at least it would be if I had a ‘race’ like our friend Mr. Thorold. I am an only son, the pride and joy of my mother, of course. On second thoughts, though, I have a sort of sister, only she is not a sister—a ward of my uncle’s. Two tender flowerlets brought up beside a running stream—you know the style of thing—all simplicity and innocence. You can imagine what she is like from me, only I excel in beauty as she excels in intellect.”

“I suppose you mean you’re lovers,”

said Miss Hatchard, who was a good deal puzzled by David's manner of expressing himself.

"I am too innocent to know what such things mean," said David, knocking the ashes out of his pipe. "I should say she couldn't help being in love with me, should not you?"

Miss Hatchard laughed.

"You are the barest-faced piece of conceit I ever see," she exclaimed. "But I suppose she is," she added, looking rather anxiously at her guest, as though she was very desirous of getting a true answer to her question.

"We were made for each other," said David between his teeth, in the full enjoyment of his pipe, and leaning back at full length in the chair; "destined by the hand of a beneficent Providence for each other. The beautiful economy of nature abhors a vacuum, so as I have no money she endows me with three thousand a

year. As I before remarked, I bring beauty and grace. The union would be a very happy one. Don't you think so?"

"Well, money is very 'andy," said Miss Hatchard, slowly, "very 'andy; but I 'ope you ain't going to marry her for that alone."

"Didn't I tell you we were made for each other, connected by the holiest bonds of childhood's associations? She and I have picked primroses together. Once we robbed a neighbouring strawberry garden. She habitually laced my boots for me, and once—blessed and ever-to-be-hallowed memory—she blacked them."

"Lor, why didn't you do it yourself?" ejaculated the artist.

"The circumstances were peculiar," said David, thoughtfully. "We were going for a drive with my mother, and were in our best rig, of course. With the habitual carelessness of childhood, I

went into the garden and filled my pockets with gooseberries. The ground was damp. The result may be imagined. Maternal wrath was on the horizon. She, like a good angel, got the blacking brushes, and averted the disaster. I am sorry to say that a light silk dress suffered in the encounter. If these tender reminiscences don't bind two ardent and youthful souls together, what will?"

"And when are you going to be married?" inquired Miss Hatchard, dubiously.

"The Lord forbid!" said David, sitting bolt upright, and almost dropping his pipe, and gazing with horror-struck features at the little artist, who had laid aside her brushes and palette, and was sitting opposite him in the dusk.

"Lor, I suppose you mean to be married some time," responded Miss Hatchard, rather amazed.

David slowly rose, knocked the ashes

out of his pipe, held out his hand, and said in a slow, pathetic voice—

“Good night, Miss Hatchard. Don’t let the weight of your cruel words keep you awake in the night hours. For me—— Ah, well, good night. Nothing short of Sanscrit will do for me after this.”

“Oh dear, I didn’t mean nothin’,” said Miss Hatchard, quite conscience stricken.

“I know you did not,” said David, tenderly, pressing her hand. “It’s my misfortune in being so delicately organized. I shall come again, if you will allow me, some other night. Good night.” And with a forgiving smile upon his suffering features David left the room.

“I can’t make that young man out noways,” said Miss Hatchard, rubbing her nose with vexation. “Howsoever, one thing is clear—he is engaged to that young heiress, little as he likes to own to it. Oh, why is men so deceitful? Why



couldn't he say straight out there's a young woman and I loves her, instead of talking all 'is nonsense about recollections and such like. One thing I will look out for—that dear girl shan't be took in by him; she shall be put up to 'im. Oh, if it weren't for they deceitful men how happy women could be!" and Miss Hatchard was lost in painful reminiscences until she was startled by a knock at her door.

"Come in," she cried; and Fiametta entered.

"Lor, my dear, I am glad you are come. Wherever 'ave you been all the evening?"

"For a walk," said the girl. "I didn't want Mr. Everest to think I waited for him to ask me again, so I went out before he came in."

"And right you are, my dear," said the little woman, delighted. "For Mr. Heverest has been here all the evening,

smoking ; and he came up here after you, I am sure. Oh, my dear, the ways of men is awful wicked and deceitful ; but I 'ave found him out in time."

"What do you mean ?"

"Why, jes this 'ere, my dear : don't you be took in with his speeches and his glances and all that, for he don't mean nothink by it. He is engaged to a young lady down at 'is 'ome ; a rich young lady, with three thousand a year ; so don't you mind nothink of what he says to you. Oh, my dear, you are young, and do be warned in time."

The little woman was quite excited ; she clasped her thin hands, and the tears stood in her little keen eyes as she glanced into the girl's face.

"What do you take me for ?" asked Fiametta, scornfully. "Do you think I cannot speak to a young man without thinking of love ? Do you think I am such a poor dolt as to believe in that worn-

out old delusion called love? I despise any man or woman who tells me that he or she is in love. I don't believe it exists. It is all of a piece with religion and property and class rights, and belongs to the ages of man's darkness and ignorance. Don't even talk to me of such lying fallacies."

"Oh, Lor!" cried the artist; "oh, lor, my dear. Wherever did you get such 'orrid, sinful notions?"

Fiametta smiled contemptuously.

"From books I have read, and meetings I have attended," she replied. "Do you suppose because my father will not let me work that, therefore, I have been idle in every way? Do you suppose I have walked about the streets and seen the scenes that I have seen for nothing? Have I not seen what men and women have been driven to in this city by the greed of those above them? Don't I know the police courts, and the refuges, and the

low haunts of London, where my brothers and sisters are hounded and persecuted and hunted down to death by those above them? Oh, and when I know all this, you come and talk to me of love! There is no love in the world; it has been crushed out by greed and crime and wealth. Oh, it will never return in your time or in mine!" And, overcome by the passion in her heart, Fiametta sank her head upon her arms, and turned and leaned against the door.

Miss Hatchard stood amazed in the middle of the room. She had never had the faintest idea of the real state of Fiametta's mind. She had treated her muttered complaints and general discontent as the natural results of her poverty-stricken life. She had never guessed at the thoughts that surged in the girl's mind, and that made even the sunshine a blackness to her, because it shone on the evil and the good alike.

She looked at Fiametta as she stood leaning against the door, with one arm across her face, as a child shields its eyes from the gaze of a curious passer-by. She was trembling with emotion; and a sob, half womanly, half childish, burst from her lips. It was difficult to know how to treat her—whether to scold her and to send her to bed, or to soothe and pity her. Miss Hatchard choose a middle course.

“I dunno how you can stand there and say such things,” she said gravely. “I know as you’ve ’ad a rough time of it, no money, nor fun like girls like to have; but ye’ve no right to say there’s no love in the world, when you think of what your father is doing for you, night and day.”

Fiametta slowly dropped her arm; she was very white, and her eyes shone like stars.

“He does not do it for my sake,” she answered; “he would do the same if I were dead. He has the pride of race in

his heart ; he loves his family name, if he loves anything. I am but a peg to hang a name upon. Don't you know that he has made his will, and that when the estates come to me, which they never will, my husband is to take my name ? ”

“ Lor ! ” said the artist ; “ well, he is a far-seein' old gent, to be sure. But ye're very hard upon him, Fiametta, to say as he don't love you.”

“ I am glad he does not,” said the girl, shortly ; “ it would only be one more wrong in the world if he did ; for to love any one person in particular defrauds humanity of another little portion of that general love that all men should have for each other. To love one person means that you will sacrifice others for that one person's benefit. It is wicked even to talk of such a thing.”

“ Go to bed with you ! ” said the little artist, tartly ; “ and I wish I was your ma, to give you a good whipping for

talking of what you don't know nothink about."

"I know that I will never love anybody," said the girl, shaking her red mane defiantly, as she marched out of the room.

"Never, never, never!"







## CHAPTER XI.

MR. FOWLER was standing in the portico of the British Museum one day in April, feeling as melancholy as a good little man with a firm faith in Providence can feel. He had had a very trying day. A superior official, and a very awful one, had come down with all his eloquence on our poor little friend's head that day, and had made things very uncomfortable indeed for him. The threat of having his rise of pay stopped was sufficiently awful in itself, and the knowledge that a few more of these scenes would end in dismissal nearly frightened him to death. And for the life of him Mr. Fowler could

not discover what he had done wrong. He had a vague idea that he had sent in his work as usual, and had had it returned a perfect network of scratches ; but what the scratches were for, or where he had been wrong, he failed to discover, for the chief having summoned him into his own room, Mr. Fowler passed through a period of annihilation with such success that his very stammering forsook him, and he came out perfectly speechless and devoid of all power of recognition of anything.

After an hour or two's quiet he recovered sufficiently to feel how miserable he was, and that it was four o'clock. So he changed his coat, and put on his hat, and crawled dejectedly out into the portico to find that it was raining heavily.

In his present despondent state, Mr. Fowler did not care whether he got wet or not ; but habit obliged him to pause and open his umbrella, and as he did so in a somewhat absent manner, he took a young

lady's bonnet off on one of the points. So fearful a catastrophe as this brought him to his senses in no time, and in a perfect agony of blushes and contrition Mr. Fowler turned to stammer out his apologies, being far too much overcome by his position to see whom he addressed.

"Oh, it doesn't matter a bit, Mr. Fowler!" said a sweet, fresh voice, that sent a thrill through him; "the bonnet is not hurt in the least."

"M-m-miss Nellie," stammered Mr. Fowler, "I n-n-n-never was so pleased—so miserable; I m-m-mean, I am most delighted to see you."

"I have been in the reading-room," said the girl; "and, oh, it does make my head ache so; and isn't this rain horrid, just when I want to go away?"

In his soul Mr. Fowler blessed that rain as he never had blessed any work of nature before; but he was human enough to say—

“ V-v-very horrid ; but it will c-c-clear in a few minutes, I have no doubt.”

Nellie pouted, and looked at the clouds.

“ Will it ? ” she said despairingly.

“ I—I—I am sure of it,” gasped Mr. Fowler. “ But won’t you come in out of the d-d-d-damp ? ”

“ Yes,” said she, sighing. “ I suppose I ought to go and improve my mind by looking at something somewhere. What do you think is the *least* improving thing I could look at here ? ”

Mr. Fowler pondered deeply.

“ I should say,” he replied reflectively, “ humming birds ; they don’t do anything, you know.”

“ Oh yes, and they are pretty,” said Nellie, enthusiastically. “ Do let us look at those, only you will promise not to tell me anything about the ‘ species,’ or their horrid names ? ”

“ Oh, certainly not ! ” cried Mr. Fowler, all his troubles gone, and feeling in a

perfect ecstasy of delight as he went up the broad, white steps to the Natural History galleries with his pretty companion. The superior officer and his manners were quite eclipsed by the fair-haired girl in the blue bonnet.

“Oh, they are pretty!” Nellie exclaimed, as they stood before one of the cases containing Mr. Gould’s beautifully arranged groups of humming birds; “they really look as if they were flying—don’t they? and the leaves and flowers and everything!”

“Th-they are b-b-b-beautifully done,” said her companion.

“Wouldn’t they be sweet in a bonnet,” sighed Nellie, as she moved on to another case. “I wanted one in a bonnet once, but aunt would not let me have it. She belongs to a society for preventing the destruction of birds for fashionable purposes, or something of that sort. But she has fowls for dinner, and I

don't see that that is any better—do you? ”

“ N-n-no,” said Mr. Fowler, who would have agreed to anything on earth that Nellie said, except that the rain had stopped. She did declare once that she thought the sun had come out; but the rash young man perjured himself deeply on the spot, and so they spent at least an hour in wandering about the galleries and chatting together, till at last Nellie declared she must go, whether the rain had stopped or not, or she would be late for dinner, and that would make her aunt late for a meeting that evening.

“ W-what sort of meeting? ” asked Mr. Fowler, who had become very nearly at his ease by this time.

“ I am not sure if it's anti-vivisection, or a debate on the necessity for abolishing the House of Lords,” returned his companion. “ I know it's something I don't care a bit about, and I shall have to go

and listen to lots of long speeches. I don't want to vivisect anybody; and the only lord I ever saw, took the chair at a meeting at our house once, and I never saw such a fuss in my life as everybody made of him. I thought aunt would have gone crazy when she found he really was coming, and all the other women nearly fought to get introduced to him; so I don't see what they want to abolish the House of Lords for."

"Must you go?" asked Mr. Fowler.

"Oh yes, I must," she replied, shaking her pretty head. "Aunt says I am criminally indifferent to all the burning questions of the day; but I don't see what good I should do by being interested in them; however, I suppose I shall be some day, if I go to meetings enough."

"I—I—I hope you won't be," said Mr. Fowler, earnestly; "I—I hope you won't be."



“Oh, you ought not to say that,” she said gravely. “I am very glad you don’t think me wicked not to care; but you ought not to encourage me in it, I am afraid.”

“You’re so m-m-m-much sweeter as you are,” said Mr. Fowler, frantically. The audacity of this shameless avowal kept him miserable for days afterwards.

Nellie blushed; that blush alternately filled Mr. Fowler with bliss and rage the whole night through. Then she smiled, and said—

“Oh, I must go; but I have enjoyed the humming birds so much. Good-bye.”

“Good-bye,” he replied. He was plunged into the depths of misery by his presumption and the thought of her departure.

They went out into the portico together. The sun was shining brightly, and all traces of the rain clouds were past. Once

in the portico, it suddenly occurred to Mr. Fowler that he might walk to the gate with his companion. He did so in silence; but as they reached the iron portals, Nellie turned to him, and, in a horror-stricken voice, exclaimed—

“Oh, what can I say to aunt about this last hour? I have learnt nothing, absolutely nothing!”

Mr. Fowler gazed helplessly into her eyes.

“S-s-say you were talking to me,” he faltered, “telling me about your m-m-m-meetings.”

Nellie’s face brightened.

“Oh, that will just do!” she cried; “but, then,” she added, “aunt will think you are bound to be interested in them, and will send you heaps of papers about them. She will want you to join societies. Oh, you will have a frightful time!”

“N-n-not at all,” said Mr. Fowler, rapidly. “I—I shall enjoy going to

any meetings where y-y-you go, Miss Nellie."

Thus that unlucky young man plunged headlong deeper and deeper into the abyss. He had scarcely come up again in time to receive Miss Nellie's grateful smile, and to take her hand in his for one brief delicious instant, when she was gone, and he was plunged down deeper than ever, and reduced to a state of semi-lunacy by a combination of rough chief and bewitching womanhood.

Nellie must have accounted for her hour in a manner very satisfactory to her aunt, for the next day a huge bundle of papers was delivered by the postman to Mr. Fowler's address at the Museum. The messenger in the hall gave them to him as he came out at four o'clock, and Mr. Fowler's heart beat high and fast as he recognized a lady's handwriting on the wrapper.

The papers consisted of slips reprinted

from newspapers and magazines, leaflets on anti-vivisection, anti-vaccination, anti-drink, anti-aristocracy, anti-sense, anti-everything that the mind of man can conceive and the energy of woman try to oppose.

They did not trouble Mr. Fowler very much ; he cared infinitely more for the wrapper than the papers. He kept them all religiously as coming more or less from Nellie, but he did not feel interested in their contents, knowing perfectly well that she did not care about them either ; but he pored over her scrap of writing that evening until he became a few degrees more bewildered than he was to begin with, and was only roused from his reverie by David knocking at his door.

“ Got any lights ? ” said that hero. “ They have a wonderful cat here, who consumes my matches every day. I wish you would secure her for your specimens. I am sure her interior would afford an

interesting study. Halloo! what have you got to do with anti-vivisection? I'll make a present of this cat to the president, and lay you anything you like that he will change sides after a fortnight."

"Why, Everest, m-m-my dear fellow, what has put you out so to-night?"

"That cat," said David. "She has eaten half a pound of tea, two eggs, a box of sardines, some tooth powder, the aforesaid matches, two bottles of beer, and a cake of soap since yesterday. Such animals ought not to be allowed to live. They prey upon the human race to an extent that is not justifiable."

"Ah, I see," said Mr. Fowler, simply, "you have no l-l-l-lock on your sideboard. I had none when I came, and afterwards, when I had one put on, I did not find things any better. But I have a c-c-c-cup-board in my room, and I find things keep all right there, only the lock is always getting out of order."

“I examined my sideboard,” said David. “They don’t tamper with the lock ; they have a much simpler plan. The back is hollow, and they just lift it out and abstract from there.”

“Dear me, w-why that accounts for my missing things even when I l-l-l-locked the doors,” said Mr. Fowler, in astonishment. “Well, how very ingenious people are, to be sure ! Now, I should never have thought of that.”

“What are those papers for ?” asked David. “Pipe-lights ?”

“Oh dear, no,” said Mr. Fowler, reddening ; “th-th-they are most interesting, I assure you. I—I—I think of attending some of the meetings. I—I—I—I am very much interested in these subjects.”

“Faith,” said David, calmly, “has been admirably defined by an intelligent school-girl as the faculty for believing that which we know to be untrue.

I believe you, therefore, Fowler, of course."

"W-w-w-well," said Mr. Fowler, turning to such a deep crimson that the whites of his eyes were quite startling by contrast, "I—I don't know much ab-b-b-bout them, but I have no doubt they are interesting. Th-th-the fact is——"

"That a goddess will be present. I quite follow you, my dear boy; go on. I can sleep quite comfortably under it now."

"I—I—I really mean to go," said Mr. Fowler. "W-won't you c-c-c-come too, Everest? I—I am sure you will n-never laugh again."

"I can quite imagine that," said David, seriously.

"N-n-no, no; I mean laugh at her again. Everest, you really are so very quick."

"My dear boy," said David, taking his pipe from his mouth and looking earnestly



at his companion, "I never laughed at women yet. They are far too serious elements of discomfort to be treated with levity."





## CHAPTER XII.

“WILL you, won’t you, will you come and see the sunset?” said David to Fiametta one evening, not long after he had been in Miss Hatchard’s studio.

“I don’t care about sunsets,” she answered.

“Then you can look at me instead, and watch the rosy glow from the west illumine the stately splendour of my expressive features. I am sure it will repay you the trouble of coming.”

“It would not be any *trouble* to come,” she said dubiously; “but I don’t see why I should minister to your pleasures. You do nothing for other people.”

She made a melancholy picture as she said this in her soft young voice. There was a troubled look, that belonged to fretted middle age rather than to girlhood, in her dark eyes. They seemed to have no light from within, but to lie like pools in a deep cavern, waiting for some radiance from without. The creamy tint of her cheeks had not even the faintest flush of rose, her dark eyes, her lips, and her tangled mass of crisp, burning hair alone had any warmth of colour in them. Any one better acquainted with girls than David would have seen promise of rare beauty in her oval face and long thin figure. She was at her most awkward age now, but even in spite of this she was not absolutely ungraceful; though her short lilac cotton frock and her cheap ill-fitting boots put the very worst possible construction upon her undeveloped figure.

David only saw in her a brooding,

unhappy girl, who had a wretched life of grinding poverty and helpless pride; an awkward ungainly girl, with no grace of manners or speech, and no knowledge of the ordinary courtesies of life common among gentlefolks—a complete contrast to well-bred Fanny, with her drawing-room graces. David was sorry for her; he felt a kind of protecting pity for all helpless things, though he rarely concerned himself much about them; but it suited him to make friends with this girl, for he honestly believed that he might brighten her life for her a little, so he systematically took no notice of her rude speeches, but continued his efforts to amuse her.

“You do nothing for other people,” she had said, and had looked down upon him with her soft sad eyes.

David did not often question the expediency of his wishes. He did not do so now, when he came up the steps

between them, put his arm round her waist and kissed her.

“You ridiculous little girl!” he said. “How can I do anything for anybody if you thwart me in my very first efforts? Here am I trying to improve your health and spirits, and you check me at every turn. You will never have any success with your pupils if you treat them in that way.”

She had blushed hotly and quickly when his lips touched her cheek, but the red faded away as rapidly as it had come.

“You had no right to do that,” she said, with something of a tremble upon her lips.

“Yes, I had, every right,” said David the undaunted. “Are we not all brothers and sisters?” He knew her socialistic tendencies, and turned them to his own account in the most unblushing manner. “I thought”—with a tender reproach in

his tone—"that you and I might be really that best of all possible things—perfect friends, without any nonsense of flirtation or that sort of thing." And he paused for a reply.

She was silent for some time, looking up into his face as he stood beside her with something of the fear of a hunted wild animal in her beautiful eyes. Gradually the fear gave place to a wistful yearning that was half reproach, half longing; but she did not lower them, only looked into his eyes as a light slowly gathered in her own. David could bear it no longer; he stooped and kissed her lips.

"You agree, dear little friend?" he said. "Now let us go for our walk."

She turned and went silently upstairs.

"Will she come downstairs again?" thought David, as he waited for her. "Really, girls are moderately interesting, after all."

And David was so absorbed by the

profundity of his new discovery that Fiametta was standing beside him before he noticed her.

“I am ready,” she said.

“Eh, so you are. I must get my hat.” And they went down the stairs together and out into the streets.

They did not say much while they crossed the dull, dusty squares and monotonous respectable streets of Bloomsbury, where the air felt as if it had passed through the lungs of half London before it got there. After they crossed the Euston Road and came into the low, dirty streets on their way to Cambridge Gate, Fiametta remarked—

“I wonder if aristocrats ever come into streets like these, and what they feel when they do.”

“Just what I do,” said David,—“a yearning to get out again. What else should they feel? They have noses like other people, you know.”



Fiametta glanced scornfully at him.

“Yes, I suppose they all talk in that cold, sneering way of others’ sufferings, as you do.”

“I shouldn’t wonder if they do. You see ‘other people,’ that is, people outside one’s acquaintance, don’t concern one much.”

“They ought,” said the girl vehemently. “The misery and suffering of other people ought to affect you.”

“Why?” asked David.

“So that you might help them. Help to break down the awful barriers that are raised between the rich and the poor, to do away with the tyranny of the strong over the weak, to help forward the time when all men shall be equal, when there shall be no rich and no poor?”

“With an equal redistribution of property every Saturday night,” said David. “Well, perhaps it wouldn’t be such a bad thing. I should run through all mine in

the week, and come up for a fresh supply on Saturday. It would save one a great deal of trouble ; for married men with large families it would be a boon and a blessing. Go on, my dear ; this is very instructive."

"You are mocking me !" she cried, turning upon him with a flash of anger. "You are cruel and scoffing."

"Not at all," said David, tucking her hand into his arm ; "but you must remember that I have been brought up among the upper classes, at least my uncle, poor old fellow, is a gentleman of good family. Don't despise him for it ; it was managed absolutely without his consent being asked ; he can't help it. So you must make allowances for me, you see. Here we are at the park. Now we will find a nice grassy place, and I will smoke, and you shall instruct."

After some trouble they discovered a little knoll on the western side of the

great walk, that was tolerably free from intruders. And here they settled themselves, Fiametta sitting on the grass looking towards the west, with the sunlight turning her hair into rippling gold, and David stretched at full length beside her.

The hum of feet and voices, and the multitudinous sounds of the great city were in the air, but a blue haze hovered among the trees, and lay over the villas of St. John's Wood, and seemed to cut them off from the streets. Overhead the sky was golden and orange, and the sun was sinking into a hazy nest of dull crimsoned smoke in the west.

"Well," said David, after a long silence, "it's pretty comfortable, isn't it?"

"Yes," she said, with a long sigh. "And why should I be comfortable when there are thousands of people there"—and she waved her hand towards the east—"toiling, and miserable, and wretched?"

“My poor little dear,” said David, raising himself on his elbow and looking into her face, “why do you have such thoughts?”

“I can’t help them, and I wouldn’t if I could.”

“You would rather be miserable?” asked David.

“No,” she said, angrily, “no; I would rather every one was happy. You know what I mean.”

“You would rather, for instance, that I was happy than miserable.”

“I don’t care for you in particular. I mean that every one ought to be happy, and it is wicked for a few people to be happy when millions are full of wretchedness. I wish that you were unhappy, very unhappy; for then you might care a little for others’ misery, and so help to make things right.”

“You will make me unhappy before you have done,” said David, reproachfully.

"I wish I could," she exclaimed vehemently.

"By George! I think you will if you go on like this," he returned, as he resumed his pipe. And then they both fell to watching the sun sink slowly down into the west. "Well, do you feel satisfied?" asked David, as the last of the crimson clouds faded into purple. "You have spoilt a splendid sunset for me, and taken all the flavour out of three pipes of tobacco. Very well for a beginning."

Another of those quick painful blushes dyed the girl's face.

"I did not mean to do that," she faltered.

"To-morrow night," said David, "I shall only smoke two pipes, the next night one, the night after I shall sigh very heavily, on the following night with good luck I shall groan, by the end of a week I shall be able to weep. You have a very promising pupil."

Her dark, solemn eyes looked so reproachfully at him that he did what he ought not to have done, and stooped under the shadow of the trees and kissed her again.

“I don’t mean that either,” he said. “We won’t talk nonsense any more. Shall I tell you some more about my home in Devonshire?”

“Yes,” she said.

And so he told her of the old Rectory, the tall trees that shadowed it, the roses that crept about its windows, the flowers in his mother’s garden, the deep green lanes, and the flowery meadows. Fiametta had never been in the country, and her quick imagination was fired by his descriptions. He noted the effect they had upon her, how they drew her out of her morbid self-communings, and prolonged his bright account until they reached the door of the house.

“I did not know anything was like

that," she said with a sigh, as they went up the stairs.

"Come out to-morrow night and I will tell you some more," said David; "it will make you so delightfully miserable by contrast, you know, that it will be criminal in you to resist. What—won't you wish me good night?"

"No," she said angrily. "You are a scoffer!" And she vanished up the stairs, all the memory of his bright pictures of country life driven away by his banter at the end.

She would not stop at Miss Hatchard's door and speak to her, as she generally did when she came in, but went straight up into the garrets.

Her father was there as usual, sitting at the little table with his papers before him. He took no notice of her coming in until she had placed some bread and cheese on a plate beside him for his supper, and then he bade her go to bed, for it was late.



“I will go down and sit with Mr. Everest while you take the candle into your room,” he said. “It is the last we have, so put it outside the door when you have finished with it.”

“Mr. Everest,” she repeated ; “what do you know of Mr. Everest ? ”

The old man shuffled his papers about nervously, and stammered a little in his answer.

“I—I, well, that is, Mr. Everest—oh yes, my dear, I met him in the Museum one day. He reads there very regularly. A very intelligent young man, a young man worth cultivating. Don’t forget about the candle, my dear.”

“Mr. Everest reads when he comes in,” said the girl. “You will hinder him if you go down.”

“I shall not stay a moment. I have a question I want to ask him. I have been down once to-night, but he was out. Good night, my love, God bless you.”

And the old man shambled out of the apartment.

Fiametta stood looking thoughtfully after him. She could not understand her father's anxiety to go downstairs, neither did she quite see why David, if he knew her father, had never told her so. She remembered that he had not shown any wish to talk about him when his name had been casually mentioned in the course of their conversation. On the other hand, she did not consider that her father was a sufficiently interesting person for David to express much curiosity about him, so she thought no more of the matter, for the memory of her own wrongs, in the shape of his mocking speeches, kept her eyes burning and her pulses hot for a long time after her father had come back again.

Mr. Thorold's errand to David's room was capable of two interpretations, neither of which, fortunately for Fiametta's peace

of mind, occurred to her. A broken-down old man, whose best years have been spent in pursuance of a delusion, with no friends, no money, no prospects, is reduced to one of two things—to starve, or to borrow. The workhouse, the only other possible refuge, was not even in the question to such old men as Mr. Thorold. So much of the gentleman was left in him still that he could borrow, for he believed that in some not very remote future he could repay shillings by pounds, but to accept alms was just as impossible for him as to explore the interior of Africa. Even the borrowing was not pleasant, though, as he repeated over and over to himself as he groped his way down the dark stairs, any gentleman may be in temporary difficulties and obliged to call upon his friends for pecuniary assistance; but so little did he like the task, that his manner was of the most offensive nature when David opened his

door in answer to his knock. He tried by the lordliness of his air, poor old man, to do away with the extreme lowliness of his errand.

“I ha—called, ha,” he said, “in fact—I have wished.”

“Pray come in,” said David, divining his visitor’s errand at once. “I am just going to have supper; will you join me?”

“I am obliged to you. No, I thank you. I dined late.”

“Oh, you had better,” said David, good-humouredly, not in the least taken in by this very transparent lie. “Anyhow, have a glass of beer?”

“None, I thank you. In fact, it was a mere matter of business I called to see you about—a mere temporary accommodation. I am on the right track, the right track at last, Mr. Everest,” said the old man, suddenly dropping his imposing air, and looking anxiously for some con-

firmation of his doubting hopes into the younger man's face.

"Of course, of course," said David; "no doubt you are."

"Certainly, certainly," he assented, again resuming his offensive tone of patronizing importance; "not the least doubt about it. But a set of low fellows—attorneys, low fellows, who are obliged to drain and squeeze every penny they can out of their superiors,—these grasping, low fellows, why, they drain a man before he comes into his property. They will do nothing, absolutely nothing, my dear sir, without money."

"Which means," said David to himself, "that my friend the patriarch has no money to buy his breakfast with." But he listened in silence.

"You have seen my daughter?" said the old man pompously. "That young lady, sir, has in her veins some of the best blood of the Italian nobility. My wife was

a Vercelli. You know my family? Is it not, I ask you, a monstrous thing that that young lady should be the prey of a low gang of grasping attorneys? Incredible!"

"So it is," said David, "very. Can I be of any assistance to you?"

The old man looked eagerly at him. There was a hungry light in his bleared eyes, a ghastly expression on his haggard face, his long iron-grey hair mingled with his rough beard over his greasy patched coat. He was as little like the heir to a great estate as can well be imagined; and David, for one, had never believed he had a shadow of a claim.

"I have no money," he said, laying his long claw-like fingers on the table, "none at all." He was trembling with excitement.

"Have a glass of beer, do!" said David. "Odd thing, you know, I have been without money too. It's a common complaint. Your daughter, by the way, has

a charming remedy for all those diseases, though I can't say I have completely mastered the details of her scheme yet. I only know it holds out delightful hopes to lazy men, like myself."

Mr. Thorold had taken the glass of beer that David pressed upon him, but he sat with it in his hand, thinking. The light had vanished out of his eyes as it was wont to do out of his daughter's—completely and suddenly like the light of a lamp blown out. His head was pushed slightly forward, his shoulders bowed. When he spoke again it was in his usual high-pitched, trembling voice.

"They scoff at me because I am poor," he said. "How should a man be otherwise than poor when he is unlawfully kept out of his property? I say unlawfully. James Thorold has no claim, not the shadow of a claim. Was not John Thorold the elder son, and did he not go abroad and marry? Yes; I know he married. They have no



right to say he died a bachelor. I will prove it. He is my ancestor. How am I a Thorold if he did not marry? They are liars and robbers all together, every one of them, from James back to Robert, John's younger brother; but I will prove it yet—prove his marriage in spite of them all." And in his weak, nervous excitement he half rose, forgetting the glass he held in his hand.

"Put it inside your coat instead of out," said David, checking its overflow. "It's clear waste of the gifts of Providence to wash a coat with beer."

The old man looked confusedly at him.

"I will prove it yet," he said.

"Of course you will," replied David. "Have some supper?"

The question seemed to recall his wandering faculties.

"No, no," he said. "I came about something;" and he looked helplessly at David.

“To be sure,” said David, cheerfully. “Done the same thing myself”—which was a lie. “Will a sovereign be any use? Sorry I can’t say a note, but it’s near the end of my financial month. They pay us in the middle of the month, which is a most confounded arrangement; for one always feels that the calendar month is the orthodox one, so one is ridiculously liable to run out of one’s coin in the early days of the new one.”

Again that swift, sudden light rushed into the old man’s eyes as he saw the gleam of the gold upon the table, and he stretched out his trembling hand towards it; but he drew it back, and, looking with an affectation of carelessness for his hat which he had put on to come downstairs, remarked—

“Ah, you are very good. A mere temporary assistance. Twenty per cent. is always my principle.”

“Oh, don’t bother about that,” said

David, carelessly. "Very glad to be of any use to you."

"Excuse me, but I—ah, really cannot accept this *loan* as a favour; not as a favour." And the old man laid the money, with much dignity, on the table.

David would have laughed had the poor old figure before him been a whit less pathetic in its feeble pride and wandering intellect; as it was, he felt kindly disposed to the poor shattered gentleman.

"The favour is on my side," he said gravely, with a bow.

The old man returned the courtesy with something approaching to a real stateliness of gesture; but he marred its effect completely by turning, as he came to the door, and saying—

"I am on the right track, the right track now." And so saying disappeared on the dark landing.



### CHAPTER XIII.

MR. FOWLER was sitting alone in his little sitting-room the day after he had escorted Nellie Guthrie through the Natural History Departments of the British Museum, and was thinking with all his might and main about her, when a card was brought to him bearing the name of "Mr. Thomas Marlow" upon it.

"You did not recognize me, nor did I you," said the owner of the card, following Sarah Ann into the room. "But Miss Guthrie and Miss Markham were speaking of you last night, so I thought I would hunt you up. They gave me your private address at the Museum."

“ M-Marlow, how do you do ? I—I—I am delighted to see you,” stammered Mr. Fowler, faintly, as he endeavoured, by some inward process, to pull himself together. Then as the visitor advanced, and he recognized the cool stranger who had carried Nellie from him on the night of the party at Miss Markham’s house, his brow contracted—darkened would be the proper word, if Mr. Fowler had not been too fair and his eyebrows too light for the expression to be appropriate.

The stranger did not appear to notice it, but stood with his back to the mantel-shelf, and his hands in his pockets, as coolly as if he were the owner of the rooms, while Mr. Fowler sank somewhat helplessly upon a chair.

“ I—I—— ” began Mr. Fowler; “ really you came upon me so unexp-p-p-pectedly that I—why, I haven’t seen you since I left school.”

“ No,” responded his visitor. “ You

left before me, I think. I went to Cambridge from there, where I did pretty well; in fact, was third wrangler."

"Dear me, how very extraordinary!" said Mr. Fowler.

"Not at all. Why?"

Mr. Fowler's stammering became so hopeless that his visitor gave up attempting to understand him.

"It's a pity you haven't given up that habit of yours yet," he said. "I remember it was very much against you at school. By the way, what are you doing now?"

"I—I—I am an as-as-ass-" ("You always were," muttered the visitor) "assistant in the British Museum," gasped Mr. Fowler at last.

"That's a poor thing, isn't it?" said Mr. Marlow. Then, without waiting for an answer, "I am a professor of sociology, and also lecturer at Newton, the women's college."

"Why, dear me, how you have got on!" said Mr. Fowler, surprised into straightness of speech, since his recollections of Tom Marlow were of his being the stupidest boy in the school.

"Yes," said his visitor carelessly; "it was examinations that did it. I have a wonderful power of cram, Fowler, and that is what makes a man get on nowadays. Now you, I remember, took a long time over your work, but you never forgot any of it."

"Oh dear, no!" cried Mr. Fowler. "I shouldn't think of forgetting anything I ever learnt."

Mr. Marlow shrugged his shoulders and changed the conversation.

"I saw you talking to a little cousin of mine the other night," he said; "a nice little girl, Helen Guthrie. If she hadn't got such an awfully baby face she would do very well."

"Hasn't M-m-m-miss Guthrie any



parents?" Mr. Fowler asked, feeling suddenly very hot.

"No," said the visitor, examining the toe of his boot with great deliberation; "she is entirely dependent on her aunt. She is a nice little girl, but weak, and dreadfully ignorant. I have been talking to my aunt about taking her in hand myself, and coaching her a little. To tell you the truth, Fowler, I rather like the little thing. Weakness isn't a bad point in a wife."

Mr. Fowler could only gasp. This dreadful announcement took away all his present consciousness for awhile. He was not certain that he did not mutter, "Oh dear, yes," or "certainly," or some such remark; but when he came to himself, Mr. Marlow was explaining the system of education he intended pursuing with his cousin.

Mr. Fowler listened as in a dream. Shortly afterwards, when his visitor took

his leave, he laid his head, with his spectacles still on, upon the round table, and allowed his feelings to overcome him.

What could exceed the misery of Mr. Fowler for the next two or three days? When it is stated that the particularly awful chief before mentioned sent for him, and administered another awful reprimand, and that Mr. Fowler came out from his presence actually feeling that he didn't care, any intelligent reader will discover that his case was very bad indeed.

In fact, if it had not been that Nellie Guthrie, when returning from a friend's house in Tavistock Square, had found that the shortest way to Weymouth Street was across the top of Bloomsbury Square just at ten minutes past four, when by the merest accident in the world Mr. Fowler met her, a very dark tragedy might have closed over the poor little man's career. His work for the last few

days had been absolutely atrocious, but by the kindness of one or two humane superiors had been kept from the awful chief; but that sort of thing could not go on for ever. There must be an end of it some day, and Nellie Guthrie was the end of it.

Mr. Fowler would not have seen her, of course. He was not good at seeing people in the streets. In the first place, he never expected to see any people that he knew, and, in the second, he could not see them if they were there, for his range of vision was decidedly limited; so it was Nellie who spoke first.

“ Good afternoon, Mr. Fowler.”

“ Eh? Oh, dear me!” cried the little man. “ W-w-why, Miss Nellie!”

“ I have been seeing some friends—at least, a friend,” said Nellie, with a blush.

That blush completed Mr. Fowler’s misery; it only wanted that to end all

things for him. But though a cold despondency settled down upon him that seemed to curdle every drop of blood in his body, he was man enough to say—

“I—I hope I may congratulate you, Miss Nellie.”

What was his intense surprise to see the young lady before him burst into tears. She did it very quietly, and put up her handkerchief at once; but Mr. Fowler, short-sighted as he was, did see the tears, and as she hurried on he turned and walked beside her.

“I didn’t think *you* would have said that,” she said, looking at him reproachfully as she dried her eyes.

Mr. Fowler was absolutely beside himself; he would, if left to his feelings, have extemporized a war dance upon the pavement in his agony, but decorum held him for her own, and he only grasped the handle of his umbrella the tighter, and allowed a cold shiver to run down his back.

“ Oh, I did not think you would have cared,” continued Nellie, dabbing her eyes in the way that ladies do when they want to avoid disturbing their complexions by traces of grief. “ I didn’t even know you knew, and I am sure I thought you would not have cared.”

“ Miss Nellie, what do you take me for? ” cried Mr. Fowler in agony. “ D-d-do you think I have no feelings at all? ”

“ I didn’t think you had feelings of that sort,” she answered gravely; and Mr. Fowler only wished that the sewer trap over which he was walking would open and let him down.

“ It’s bad enough to have aunt and her friends and cousin Tom reproaching me over it, and now you will do the same. Oh dear, it is horrid! ” and again the handkerchief was in requisition.

A gleam of something, not daylight, but a very murky radiance as from a

long-neglected lantern, filtered slowly into Mr. Fowler's soul.

"I—I—I don't understand," he faltered, almost choking himself with the effort.

"What! Don't you understand," she exclaimed, turning upon him with the handkerchief still in her hand, "that I have been up for the Cambridge local, and, oh dear, failed? I dare say you thought I should pass. It was very kind of you, I suppose, to take it for granted that I should, and so congratulate me. But I haven't. I am not in it at all."

A gleam of triumph lit up Mr. Fowler's face. Tom Marlow had failed! If his enemy had been before him at that moment, he would have smiled the smile of the scornful over his vanquished head—to such a pass may a good man be brought by the witchery of a fair face and a childish voice. Mr. Fowler was a good man and a Christian, but the spirit of the Psalmist was strong within

him as he felt how righteous a thing it was that the designs of the ungodly should come to nought, or something to that effect.

Nevertheless he was rather in a dilemma, for he could not very well explain to Nellie what her cousin had stated to him as to his designs about her. Moreover, a conflict still raged in his soul. Who was the friend at whose mention she had blushed? Gloomy forebodings filled him again as he stammered out—

“I—I—really—well, I s-s-s-suppose your friends——”

“I haven’t any friends,” said Nellie, sadly; “they are all aunt’s friends. She has quantities of friends. They tolerate me, but oh, they disapprove of me dreadfully.”

“Nobody could do that,” said Mr. Fowler, enthusiastically.

“Oh, but they do,” she replied, shaking



her head; "and now I have failed in this horrid examination it will be worse than ever. I suppose I shall have to try again."

"Oh no, no; don't!" cried Mr. Fowler. Nellie opened wide her pretty eyes.

"Why, you just began to congratulate me!" she said in surprise.

"I—I—indeed I didn't," gasped Mr. Fowler, eagerly. "I—I—I n-n-n-never thought of such a thing, I assure you."

This statement not at all tending to decrease the width of Nellie's eyes, Mr. Fowler took a headlong plunge into his future prospects, and emerged a very different man from what he was when he went in. Indeed, he was so precipitous in his career that he left his stammering behind him, and never paused to take it up until he came out an engaged man.

"I tried to congratulate you because of what your cousin Tom said to me a few nights ago," he explained. "I believe

he loves you, and I naturally supposed you returned his affection. Miss Nellie, if you can tell me you do not do so, I shall be the happiest man alive."

Nellie began to walk very quickly, almost to run, in fact. Her face was very rosy, and her eyes very bright, but she kept them hidden under her long lashes, not even giving a glance at her companion, who hurried on beside her. Mr. Fowler could not bear the suspense long.

"Miss Nellie, is it true?" he cried.

"No," she said, turning away her face from him, and quickening her pace until he could scarcely keep up with her.

"No, it isn't true a bit."

They had passed the Museum, and she had turned haphazard up Gower Street, not seeming to mind where she went, and of course Mr. Fowler followed her. There were a good many people in Gower Street, as there generally are between four and

five every day ; and the sight of a pretty agitated girl flying along at her topmost speed, followed by a little panting man in spectacles with an umbrella, was calculated to awaken curiosity in the minds of the pedestrians. It is to be feared that comments the reverse of complimentary were passed upon Mr. Fowler's character and habits, but that gentleman was, for the first time in his life, entirely superior to any considerations of propriety or decorum.

On they went, Nellie first, and Mr. Fowler half a yard behind her. The girl's face burning with girlish shame, the man's crimson with excitement and hard walking.

But even a girl's powers of endurance when running away from her lover have a limit, and Nellie came to a full stop as they reached the railings of University College grounds. So suddenly, indeed, did she stop, that it was but little

short of a miracle that Mr. Fowler's hat and spectacles did not fly off into the road; but he jerked them back into their places, and inquired abruptly—

“Miss Nellie, why do you run away from me?”

“I am not running away from you,” she answered, beginning to walk slowly beside the railings, and pretending to be deeply absorbed in the sight of some students hurrying out at the college doors. “I suppose the classes are just over now?”

“But you did run away from me. Oh, Miss Nellie, Miss Nellie, have I offended you?”

“No,” said Nellie, hanging her head and minutely examining the buttons of her little glove.

“Then—oh, Miss Nellie, do you think you could care about me as—as well as your cousin Tom?”

“I don't care about cousin Tom,” said

Nellie, with a pout. "I don't care about him a bit."

"Then could you?—do you? Oh, Miss Nellie, could you care about me?"

They had come to the lodge gates. Just beyond them are some posts on the pavement, posts between which only one person can pass at a time; but Mr. Fowler in his ardour was oblivious of such small considerations as space, and probably would have tried to get through the same space as his lady-love, or to collide the intervening post, if she had not stopped and turned a little towards him.

"I think I could," she said; and then she moved on with her eyes downcast and her face rosier than ever; and a group of lads who were behind her pushed between the posts and rushed hallooing on their way back from school.

It is not a mere figure of speech to say that Mr. Fowler was too happy to speak.

Words could not have been wrung out of him at the present moment for anything under the sun. He was literally stunned by the glow of life and happiness that came over him. He had never felt that there was anything particular in life until that moment, and he hardly knew how to bear himself in the revelation that had come to him. Fortunately they were in a place where nothing was required of him but a mechanical motion of his legs. There could be no embraces, no pretty speeches outside the Gower Street Metropolitan Station at a busy hour in the afternoon. He could not even have offered her his arm with any comfort in the midst of two conflicting streams of people. So he remained silent without offence, and they walked on together into the Euston Road.

Here, of course, there was a continuous stream of foot-passengers, omnibuses, and carts. The "season" was at its height,

but the season does not make much difference to the Euston Road. Our two lovers turned to the east and walked towards Euston Square, for no reason, probably, than that by so doing they avoided crossing the road.

The shrubs behind the grimy railings, in the strips of gardens that line the road, were as dusty as a London spring could make them. Shabbily clad men and women passed by ; dirty children, rumbling waggons, everything around spoke of struggling London lower middle-class life, where there was no refinement, no loveliness, no beauty, no enjoyment.

Suddenly the girl spoke.

“ Oh, isn't that beautiful ? ” she cried, and she pointed to a tall building beyond the trees of the square—a tower and pinnacles, and turrets of a soft pink tint lying full in the afternoon sun against a great bank of low white cumulus cloud.

It was only the Midland Railway



Station; but to the girl at that moment it looked as beautiful as the Duomo at Florence, or the Campanile of St. Mark at Venice.

“Very beautiful,” said her companion, looking into her face.





## CHAPTER XIV.

NELLIE did not go back to her aunt's in Weymouth Street until six o'clock that evening. Fortunately that good lady was too much occupied, in company with some other ladies, in organizing a meeting for the representation of women at local vestries, to be much interested in knowing how her niece had passed the afternoon, so she only greeted her with—

“Good gracious, child, how warm you look; and you must get your dinner how you can, for we have finished; and Tom will be here directly to take us to the Mile End Parliament, by special permission; so be quick.”

"I don't want to go to Mile End," said Nellie. "And, oh, aunt, I want to speak to you." And tears came into the girl's eyes.

"Oh, my dear child, I can't possibly stay now. I have all the estimates of the Billingsgate fish supply to go over, and——"

"But we haven't anything to do with Billingsgate," said Nellie, a little fretfully.

"But I *have*," said Miss Markham, tumbling over some disordered piles of papers on the table before her. "Philippina"—to one of her friends—"have you a pencil? Every woman has a public duty to perform in these days of parliamentary indifference. Oh no, Philippina, those belong to the School Board papers; they have got mixed somehow. But it is no use explaining to you, Helen; you have no appreciation of your privileges as a woman of the nineteenth century."

“Miss Guthrie,” said the Philippina before mentioned, who was a short person with a snub nose, and a high metallic voice, “appears to me to have not yet grasped that all-important and fundamental principle, that man is woman’s moral, mental, and physical inferior.”

“No, I am sure I haven’t,” said Nellie, with such spirit that her aunt stopped in the middle of untying a bundle of papers with the string in her mouth, and stared at this revolt on her niece’s part in unfeigned surprise; “and what’s more, I don’t want to, and don’t mean to!” And quite overcome by the events of the afternoon, Nellie walked out of the room, and banged the door after her.

“Lucilla,” said Philippina (Miss Markham’s baptismal name was Lucy)—“Lucilla, this will not do.”

“I am sure I don’t know what has happened to the child,” said Miss Markham, going on with her papers. “She

has always been—well—indifferent to true principles, but never openly rebellious as she is now.”

“She is obstinate, unreasonable, and contumacious,” said her friend. “In these days of women’s dawning freedom it is of the utmost importance that every woman should feel and exercise her immense power properly. This girl must be checked, Lucilla.”

“Well, I am sure I have done my best,” returned Miss Markham. “As for lectures, meetings, discussions, debates, courses, I am sure no girl in London has heard more.”

“I am of opinion,” said Philippina, firmly, “that there is a young man in this case.”

“It can’t be anybody but Thomas Marlow, then,” returned Miss Markham, “and he is safe enough; and I am sure I wish he had the training of her instead of me. Her mother was just the same.

I never could do anything with her ; and with the same sort of baby face that all the men like."

" Men," said Philippina, viciously, " have no taste in female beauty. Look at your style, Lucilla ! I do not say it out of flattery, as you know, but how infinitely superior was your intellectual cast of face to your sister Helen's babyish pink and white and dimples. Yet no man has ever asked *you* to marry him ;" and Philippina looked admiringly at her friend.

" I don't know that," said Miss Markham, so very snappishly that her strong-minded friend looked and felt extremely surprised. " I am not bound to tell everybody whether that has happened or not."

" *I*," said Philippina, drawing herself up majestically, " am proud to say that no man has ever presumed to insult *me* in such a manner. Others may think differently. Lucilla, mark my words, a

man is at the bottom of this conduct of Helen's."

"Then it must be Thomas Marlow," said Miss Markham, with a sigh of relief.

And then both ladies worked themselves into a state of partial frenzy over the Fishmongers' Corporation, and did such wonderful things with estimates and figures, that no man would have recognised the deductions as having the remotest connection with the original sources of information.

Meanwhile Nellie had gone up into her room and refreshed herself by the luxury of a good cry, and made an obstinate determination in her breast that no power on earth should drag her to any meeting in company with Tom Marlow that night. So when in due course of time Miss Markham called "Helen! Helen!" from the foot of the stairs, she took no notice, except to assure herself that her door was bolted.



“Can’t you go and knock at her door?” she heard her cousin Thomas ask her aunt.

“Oh dear! and we are so late; and my boots not laced! and, oh dear! where *can* my gloves be? Jane,” to the housemaid, “run up and ask Miss Helen if she has seen them, and do tell her to be quick.”

“I am not coming,” said Nellie, in answer to the servant’s knock and message. “Tell aunt I don’t want to go, and I am tired, and I have not seen her gloves.”

“She must come!” screamed Miss Markham, as she tied on her bonnet at the foot of the stairs, outside her own bedroom door. “Tell her we are waiting.”

“I am not coming,” said Nellie, obstinately. And with this message the servant came down.

Miss Markham looked in consternation at the professor of sociology standing beside her.

“I will wait for her,” he said quietly.  
“Leave me to manage her, aunt.”

“Oh dear ! but what shall we do without you ?” exclaimed Miss Markham, excitedly.

“You can take my card,” he said, giving her one. “I have no doubt that Helen and I will follow immediately. In point of fact,” he said, lowering his voice to meet her ear alone, “I am not sorry that this has occurred. I rather want a little talk with her. We will follow in a hansom. You understand ?” And he nodded mysteriously towards Philippina, who testified her disapproval of the proceedings by stalking downstairs in a majestic manner.

“Oh yes, I understand, quite !” cried Miss Markham, much flurried. “But, oh dear ! I wish you hadn’t mentioned it just now ; after those estimates, and with this question of the manhood suffrage coming on to-night, I am quite flurried. But

there, Philippina is waiting ; I shall see you again soon." And Miss Markham bustled down the stairs and into the cab at the door.

Perhaps the expression on Mr. Marlow's face, as he leant over the balusters and watched them well out of the house, was not altogether complimentary to the two high-minded ladies who were the objects of his gaze, for he muttered, as he turned to go up to the second-floor, where Nellie's and his own rooms were, the words—

"Fussy old maids ! Thank goodness, she hasn't an atom of their sort of nonsense about her." And then he knocked at her door.

"Who is that ?" asked the young lady in very unangelic tones.

"Aunt Lucilla and Miss Jiggers are gone to Mile End. Come down and sit in the balcony in the back drawing-room."

"I am tired," said Nellie, shortly.

“Well, you can rest there. Really, Helen, this conduct is most undignified and babyish. I expected better things from you.”

“Then you had no reason to,” said Nellie. “I am going to lie down, and it will be very unkind if you disturb me.”

Mr. Thomas Marlow pondered for a little while. He had never been thwarted by his pretty cousin before, and her conduct to-night came with rather a shock upon him.

“They are all alike,” he said to himself; “obstinate as mules. Well, I did not think so of her. Helen!” he said aloud, “you can have no idea how extremely silly your conduct is. Come out at once!”

“I shan’t,” said Nellie. “You have no right to order me.”

“I hope to prove to you,” said Mr. Marlow, setting his teeth and preparing to descend the stairs, “that I have the

very best right ; for the present, good evening."

"Good evening," said Nellie, a little ashamed of herself ; "I hope you will enjoy the meeting."

"Won't you come ?" he said, pausing ; for he detected the softening of her tone.

"No ; really I am tired," she said ; and with that Mr. Thomas Marlow had to be content.

He had an interview with his aunt that evening that resulted in a very satisfactory arrangement for himself ; and he further manipulated Miss Markham's "engagements" for the next day, so as to allow of her giving Nellie an hour in the morning, and so preparing her mind for an interview with himself in the afternoon.

What was that worthy lady's surprise, when, in answer to her homily on Thomas Marlow's virtues and accomplishments, Nellie burst into tears, and confessed all the story of yesterday afternoon's doings,

winding up with a petition to her aunt to see Mr. Fowler, who was going to call there that evening.

"It is quite impossible, Helen," said Miss Markham, "quite impossible that I can either see or speak to that young man, and it is equally impossible for you to do so either, more so in fact. You have behaved in a—in a—I hardly know how to express it—in a disgracefully *unwomanly* way, Helen!"

"I didn't," Nellie sobbed. "What else could I do when he told me he loved me?"

"You should never have allowed it to come to that," said her aunt, severely. "Any woman with the least sense of her position can always stop any presumption of that sort."

"But if I liked him it wasn't presumption," said the girl, arguing for her lover as she best knew how. "Oh, aunt! he is much—much better than I am."

“Nonsense,” said her aunt, sharply ;  
“he is nothing of the kind. You are the most ungrateful woman I ever saw, Helen. You might just as well have been created a man. And after all the trouble I have taken with you, really this is too much !” And Miss Markham rose in great vexation and walked to the window.

“Oh, but, dear aunt,” said Nellie, timidly following her, “I am not ungrateful to you ; not a bit. And oh, aunt, you do want me to be happy, don’t you ?”

“I want you to be sensible, and free, and to enjoy the glorious privileges you were born to ; not to be the slave of a low, selfish creature like man, who will degrade you to the level of a mere domestic machine for his comfort.”

“But you want me to marry Tom,” said Nellie, with her blue eyes rounding, as they always did when she was puzzled or surprised. “Shouldn’t I be a domestic drudge just the same, then ?”



“No!” snapped her aunt. “Thomas has noble ideas about women; he assigns them their right position in the world. You know how he labours for their cause. It would be a privilege for you, who are so weak, to work with him. As Thomas’s wife you might obtain a proud position in the world of science or politics.”

“I am quite sure of one thing,” said Nellie, resolutely putting her handkerchief in her pocket, and giving it a little pat, as if to assure it she was not going to wipe away any more tears with it,—“I am quite sure of one thing—that I shall be very much less of a mere domestic drudge as Frederick’s wife than Tom’s; and, what is more, I don’t care if I am his drudge. I would rather mend his shirts than go to sleep under Tom’s lectures. I shall be much happier making things nice for Frederick than echoing all Tom’s high-flown talk. You must give me up, aunt; for I shall never be a clever woman.”

“You shall never so debase yourself with my consent,” said her aunt, angrily. “If you don’t know how to take care of yourself, I shall take care of you. I positively forbid you to speak to Mr. Fowler again.”

“Oh no, dear aunt, I must do that !” cried the girl, clasping her hand. “Please don’t say that !”

“It’s for your own good, Helen,” said her aunt, preparing to leave the room. “Now, don’t cry, you silly child. Tom is coming to see you this afternoon, and he will explain things much better to you than I have done. There’s Philippina calling me to go to Doctor Alice Freeman’s about a vaccination case. Now remember, child, you must see Tom, and must *not* see that dreadful young man. Oh, Helen ! how can you like a man who stammers ? There, good-bye, child ; now don’t cry !” And Miss Markham bustled away.

“I’ll never speak to that horrid Tom

again ! ” sobbed Nellie, as she went up to her own room. “ And oh, how disappointed dear Frederick will be this afternoon ! To compare him to that horrid Tom ! ”





## CHAPTER XV.

DAVID, coming in with Fiametta in the twilight of the May evening, was somewhat surprised at being jostled in the doorway as he was fitting his latch-key into the hole by Mr. Fowler, and still more so at that gentleman's brushing past him with a dismal groan upon his lips, and dashing into his own room with a reckless disregard of every one's feelings or corns.

"What can have happened to old Fowler?" thought David. "This is not the way that decorous little bird usually flies home to roost, I trust. It looks rather like hydrophobia. Good night, my dear,"

he said to Fiametta. "It will sustain me in my interview with my poor friend to know that if he bites me I shall make you miserable, as you have made me to-night."

"It will not make me miserable," she replied; "and why should Mr. Fowler bite you?"

"Because the bitten likes to bite. It must be hydrophobia. Did you notice the foam on his lips? No? Well, good night, my child. As this may be our final adieu, our last meeting in this sublunary sphere, let's have a kiss?"

"Indeed, I will not," she said, drawing herself up. "It is quite unnecessary to friendship to kiss."

"Well, when you see me going down the street on all fours, barking at the children, and behold my stiffened, gory corpse borne home on a public-house shutter, you will feel miserable to think you refused me my last request. It is a

consolation to me to give you that pleasure. Good-bye, my child, God bless you—ahem, I beg your pardon—Humanity and the votes of the majority be with you. Adieu!” And David vanished behind Mr. Fowler’s door.

He found that poor little man in the hollow of his armchair, with his knees drawn up and his face upon them, while his arms hung down perfectly limp on each side. His hat and spectacles were on the floor, and from his lips came at intervals a long, labouring groan.

“Halloo!” said David, stopping to view the wreck before him. “Is it a case of ‘If she be not fair to me, what care I how fair she be?’ Cheer up, old fellow!”

But Mr. Fowler did not cheer up at all; he only shook his head and moaned more dismally than ever, while his fingers tapped the legs of the armchair in the rhythm of despair.

“You haven’t been turned away from

the hulks, have you?" asked David, seriously. The hulks being his designation for the commodious underground cellar in which Mr. Fowler served his country.

"N-n-n-no," said Mr. Fowler, dismally; "worse than that!"

"Oh, come, that's nonsense!" said David, heartily; "it *couldn't* be worse than that. What is a bundle of foolishness bound in pink and white compared with a man's profession and his bread and butter?"

"Everest," said Mr. Fowler, looking up with a very white face, and lips that trembled with excitement, "I—I—I'll thank you not to speak in that way."

"Certainly not, Fowler; certainly not. We will call her an ethereal spirit. Perhaps she has gone out—vanished, collapsed—like an air balloon."

"E-E-Everest," said Mr. Fowler, suddenly jumping up—"E-E-Everest, you



are a very good fellow, I know ; but I—I really—you must withdraw those expressions.”

“ Which one ? ’ said David, quietly ;  
“ the last ? Certainly.”

“ Y-y-you’re insulting me ! ” gasped Mr. Fowler, frantically. “ Y-y-you insult me ! ”

“ Sit down,” said David, catching the unhappy little man by the shoulders and forcing him into a chair. “ Now, then, cool down, and tell me what is the matter.”

“ Oh, Everest ! ” moaned Mr. Fowler, forgetting all his indignation under David’s firm tones. “ Oh, Everest ! she is gone just at the very moment I thought I had her ! ”

“ Like the nimble. Ahem, I won’t hurt your feelings, Fowler. The wicked flee when no man pursueth ; but she hadn’t that excuse, for you did pursue to some tune up Gower Street yesterday—at

least, so Crockford told me in the British Museum to-day. Oh, Fowler ! Fowler ! ”

“ B-b-b-but Everest,” said Mr. Fowler, reddening, and looking extremely confused, “ th-th-that was all right, I assure you.”

“ Oh, of course it was,” replied David, coolly ; “ it always is in these cases. Go on.”

“ I-i-it’s her aunt,” stammered Mr. Fowler.

“ What the deuce has her aunt got to do with it ? You don’t want to marry them both, I suppose ? ”

“ C-c-certainly not,” said Mr. Fowler, redder than ever. “ My dear Everest, how can you think of such things ? ”

“ I don’t see what else the aunt can have to do with it,” said David, yawning. “ Hurry up to something interesting, my boy ; I don’t care a twopenny blank about the aunt.”

“ Oh, but, indeed,” said Mr. Fowler,

very earnestly, "the aunt is a most important person, extremely so; in fact, she has been a sort of m-m-mother to Nellie," he added with a gush.

"There can only be one sort of mother," said David, authoritatively, "and that's the genuine article. No other sort is worth a cent."

"W-w-well, but she has always taken care of her—supported her; in fact, N-n-nellie has no means of her own at all."

"Oh, now I see what you mean," said David. "Very sensible of you, Fowler, highly so. My advice to you is, marry the aunt instead. You won't know the difference in twelve months' time, but you will have the coin."

"E-E-Everest," stammered Mr. Fowler, in great indignation, "h-h-how dare you ever say such a—think such a monstrous thing. M-m-money to be compared to—to—to Miss Guthrie!"

“Ah,” said David, thoughtfully, “no, you are right; woman couldn’t stand the comparison;” and he glanced mischievously at his companion.

Mr. Fowler was almost majestic in his indignation; he rose, and would, no doubt, have delivered a cutting speech had his impediment in that article allowed him to make any headway at all. As he was, he was thrust back again by David.

“What a hasty fellow you are!” he said. “You will be murdering somebody one of these days. Why didn’t you let me finish my sentence? How can you compare a goddess or an angel with vulgar dross? That impatient spirit of yours don’t allow a fellow to do himself justice in his remarks.”

“I—I—I really b-b-b-beg your pardon,” said the little man, gazing rather helplessly at David; “but I—I really thought you were ch-ch-ch-chaffing me.”

“Another time think before you speak,

or rather, in your case, speak before you think ; it will save you a lot of wear and tear to your tongue and your mind. Now to return to our muttuns. Take notice that I do not mean this as applying to Miss Guthrie, who may nevertheless be a lamb, for all I know. Now, Fowler, what the holy blazes is all this shindy about ? ”

“ Oh, don’t, my dear Everest, don’t be annoyed,” gasped Mr. Fowler, alarmed by his friend’s sudden change of tone ; and then, as briefly as he could, he recited the events of the last two days. “ And T-t-tom Marlow was there to-night with her, I dare say,” groaned the unfortunate little man. “ The servant would not admit me, and said there was no message beyond that neither Miss Markham nor Miss Guthrie could see me. Oh, David, what shall I do ? ”

“ Do ? Sing the song of Miriam. ‘ Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the

people which Thou hast redeemed,' as the authorized version hath it. A burnt child dreads the fire, and I suppose a singed Fowl would be in the same predicament. Or, if you don't like this line of conduct, which is what I strongly advise, do the guitar and stiletto business—marry the girl and cut Tom. But you must be prepared, then, to take the consequences, which may be serious in the extreme to everybody concerned."

"Y-y-you don't really think," said Mr. Fowler, his eyes shining with delight—"y-you don't really think th-that I could m-m-marry her, do you?"

"Human nature is capable of any foolishness," said David, sententiously; "so of course you can do that. I don't advise it, mind, and haven't the slightest doubt in the world that if you do you will live to repent it, unless a beneficent Providence carries you off in your honeymoon, which, like the restoration of open

penance, is a thing much to be wished, but little to be expected."

"I—I—I have a hundred and eighty pounds a year, rising by tens," said Mr. Fowler, thoughtfully, "to two hundred and fifty. We could live here, couldn't we? and, when one comes to think of it, Everest, it can't cost much more to keep two than one."

"That depends on which one," answered David. "A wife, for instance, may cost four hundred a year, and the husband one—at least, I know that is about the proportion observed at home with my mother and uncle. So if you cost now a hundred and eighty, your wife will require at least six hundred. Retire gracefully while you may, Fowler—hand upon your heart, low bow—lay it all on Providence, who has not seen fit to reward your merits as He ought. Curtain falls, and you are well out of it."

"I—I—I am sure," said Mr. Fowler,



his face one large beaming smile, "that you are joking now, Everest. You are a good fellow, but you don't know Nellie. Wh-wh-why, we should be happy together on a crust of b-b-b-bread and cold water. W-w-we said so only yesterday afternoon," he added, with a blush.

"Oh, well," said David, rising and going to the door, "if you have come to that, it's no use my talking any more. You may command me to the extent of rope ladders and a special licence, Fowler; but spare me, oh spare me, any speechifying then or now! A. C., *id est* 'after compliments,' as the Oriental translators head their official documents. A. C. Good night, old boy."

"There's a pretty mess that poor fellow has got himself into," thought David, as he went up to his own room.

He paused on the landing to listen if he could hear Fiametta talking to Miss Hatchard in the studio. As he did hear

her, he went up to the second-floor and knocked at the door.

“Lor, whoever can that be?” he heard Miss Hatchard say. “Come in,” she called out.

“Sorry to intrude,” said David, “but knowing Miss Fiametta’s peculiar tastes, I came up to give her a dismal piece of news. I hope it will keep you awake nicely,” he added, looking at the girl.

“Lor, what is it?” said Miss Hatchard. “You ain’t,” she added with a chuckle, “going away from us, are you?”

“No; it’s not so bad as that,” said David; “but the fact is, that I have just heard that a friend of mine is about to mentally and morally commit suicide.”

“Lor save us!” cried the artist, “whatever for?” while Fiametta looked away from him in her corner by the window.

There was only a single candle in the

room, and the window was wide open, and over the uneven roofs and between the chimney-pots of the opposite houses, which were lower than these, a faint primrose was still lingering in the sky. The girl's head stood out dark against it as she sat by the open window, leaning a little forward, as her habit often was when thoughtful or tired. She had a white dress on to-night, a dress of many washings and long life; it was tight and scanty for her, and clung tightly about her round arms, and showed every curve of her slim figure. She had lately taken to gathering up her hair into loose plaits, which she wound round her head after the manner of Italian women. They suited the pure oval of her face, and their crisp curliness still surrounded her brow like a halo.

For the first time, as David looked at her sitting there against the sky in the twilight, with the faint gleam of the

candle shining upon her white dress and ruddy hair, he felt a strange uneasiness grow up within him.

“Is she a woman, or a child?” he asked himself. “She is not like anything I have ever seen.” And so absorbed was he by her appearance, that he forgot to answer Miss Hatchard’s question as to what this calamity was all about.

Her sharp little eyes spied him out, of course, and she was mischievous enough to wait and let him get out of his inevitable confusion as best he might; for she saw that Fiametta was ignorant of his gaze, but was looking with a weary look in her dark eyes at the leaden east.

But Miss Hatchard was mistaken if she thought David was going to be confused about anything. He simply pointed towards the still figure in the window, and said, moving his lips only, to the artist—

“Paint her.”

“For yourself?” she answered in the same noiseless way.

“No; as Freyja waiting for Ódur.”

“She would never wait for any man,” said the artist, firmly.

There was a look in David’s eyes as he answered her which produced a curious effect upon Miss Hatchard. She turned to a violent crimson, and her hands involuntarily clenched themselves, while he answered—

“Time alone will show.” And with this novel remark he turned and went out of the room.

“I know him now!” cried the little woman, passionately, letting her clenched fist fall upon the round table until the tin candlestick clattered again. “I know him now, and who he is. Oh, that I never saw it at first!” And Miss Hatchard threw her arms above her head in an attitude worthy of despair.

“What is the matter?” said Fiametta, slowly turning. “Is Mr. Everest gone?”

“Yes, he’s gone,” said the little woman, bitterly. “Gone, oh yes, he is gone; but he will soon be back again, I know.”

“Well, why should he not?” said the girl, rising. “I must go to bed now, Miss Hatchard; I am tired.”

“Oh, my dear, my dear!” cried the artist, clinging with both her hands round the girl’s shoulders. “You ain’t fond of him, are you? Don’t tell me you are. I couldn’t bear it.”

“Fond of him!” said the girl. “What do you mean? No, of course I am not. I haven’t it in me to be fond, as you call it, of any one. I couldn’t if I tried. I am sure if I was going to love any one I should love you. There, don’t be absurd, Miss Hatchard! Good night.”

“Good night,” said Miss Hatchard; and the girl went away. But it was

anything but a good night for Miss Hatchard. "If I had only a known," she repeated to herself over and over again, as she paced her bedroom floor for many hours that night, "who he was, 'e should never 'ave darkened these doors."

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